SLAVERY AND SECTIONALISM: SOME ASPECTS OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY AMONG PRESBYTERIANS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH, 1789-1861

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis SLAVERY AND SECTIONALISM: SOME ASPECTS OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY AMONG PRESBYTERIANS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH, 1789-1861.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship of Presbyterians in the American South to two distinctive aspects of their culture, slavery and Southern sectionalism. The period under consideration begins with the formation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1789, and concludes in 1861 with the formation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.

An introductory section examines Southern Presbyterian attitudes to their surrounding culture before 1789. In general, Presbyterians in the South during that time accepted the institution of slavery, although notable exceptions can be found. They likewise tended to be concerned about the welfare of their society, and often felt free to criticize prevailing political and social views.

The period from 1789 through 1861 has been divided into three major sections. Part One traces Southern Presbyterian attitudes toward slavery and Southern sectionalism during the decades immediately following 1789. It is suggested that the period was one in which Southern Presbyterians held diverse views on slavery, from those advocating immediate emancipation to those holding a strong pro-slavery position. Anti-slavery thought was more pronounced than in the period before 1789, although immediate abolitionism was never tolerated. In this early period some Presbyterians migrated from the South to avoid slavery; others sought some practical means of emancipation and supported the African colonization movement as a result. The early period also saw Southern Presbyterians attempting to define the proper relationship between the Church and American government and society. They expressed the conviction that Christianity was the only foundation for a stable America, and strongly supported the emerging nationalism of the new nation.

Part Two explores the period of transition on the question of slavery, during which the diversity of opinion seen in the early period gave way to a unanimous pro-slavery sentiment among Southern Presbyterians. It is suggested that the period of transition began at different times in different sections of the South, and that the factors which brought about the change in sentiment were slightly different in each area. Of the three major areas in the South, the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia was the first in which a hardening of attitude can be detected. This took place about the time of the debates over the Missouri Compromise in 1820. Pro-slavery views were reinforced in the early 1830's, due to the Southern reaction to militant Northern abolitionism. The transition to a unanimous pro-slavery position was completed by the time of the end of the Old School-New School controversy; the threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly had forced Presbyterians in the Synod to take a firm pro-slavery position. The period of transition began about 1827 in the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina. The initial impetus came from the threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly. Pro-slavery views were reinforced through the influence of secular

Use other side if necessary.

events, particularly the Nat Turner insurrection, the slavery debate in the Virginia House of Delegates, and the Southern reaction to Northern abolitionism. As in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, the events surrounding the Old School-New School separation marked the end of diversity on slavery opinions in the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina. A somewhat similar pattern can be discerned in the synods of the Old Southwest, although the transition began at a slightly later time. The Southern reaction to militant abolitionism and the threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly were major factors which strengthened pro-slavery views in the Old Southwest. An exception was East Tennessee, in which elements of anti-slavery opinion continued to exist. During the entire period of transition, Southern Presbyterians in all areas remained committed to a national, rather than sectional, stance, in spite of strong pressures from secular and ecclesiastical sources. At the same time, agitation of the slavery issue during the period of transition tended to make the Church more reticent to criticize Southern social and political viewpoints, and the Church tended to emphasize that its mission was strictly spiritual.

Part Three covers the later period, from 1840 through 1861. The 1840's saw various foreign and domestic challenges to the Southern Church from both secular and ecclesiastical sources, but these did little more than demonstrate the solidarity of Southern Presbyterian opinion by this date. The decade was also characterized by a continued national outlook by most Southern Presbyterians. At the end of the decade, however, they began to identify more closely with the rest of the South as concern mounted over such issues as the Wilmot Proviso. The decade of the 1850's was decisive for Southern Presbyterians, for it marked a definite period of transition in attitude on sectionalism. Throughout the decade they defended the position of the South, and by the end of the 1850's they were almost completely committed to Southern sectionalism. In many respects their ecclesiastical ties were their strongest bonds with the rest of the nation. The events of 1860 and 1861 marked the final break with the North, both politically and ecclesiastically. The transition in sectionalism was complete.

An Appendix deals with the work of Southern Presbyterians among the slaves of the South. The barriers to slave missions are investigated, both within the Church and within Southern society. The various religious and cultural motives which led Southern Presbyterians to undertake slave missions are examined. The methods developed to overcome the inherent barriers to slave missions are noted, and several examples are cited of effective slave missions. Slave missions, although often undertaken from sincere motives, tended to encourage the Church to adopt a pro-slavery position. They furthermore tended to reinforce the institution of slavery.

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PREFACE

Throughout its long history the Christian Church has found itself in many different historical contexts. At times the Church has been isolated and aloof from its surrounding culture, attempting to maintain its distinctiveness in what it considered an alien and hostile world. At other times the Church has become virtually indistinguishable from its surrounding culture. Whatever its stance, however, the Church has never been able to avoid the question of its relationship to its surrounding society. Whether rejecting the world, or adopting the world, or assuming some mediating position, the Church of necessity must react to its environment. There is a sense, therefore, in which the Church has always been molded by its historical context. It is precisely for this reason that the historian looks not only at the immediate internal history of the Church in any given age, but at the broader historical context as well.

The present work is an attempt to examine the relationship of one particular Church to its surrounding society. We will be specifically concerned with the reaction of Presbyterians in the American South to certain aspects of Southern society, especially slavery and Southern sectionalism, from 1789 through 1861. The twin issues of slavery and sectionalism were closely related, and, more than any other issues, served to bring about the development of a distinctive civilization in the American South.[1] Eventually they

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[1]The literature on the distinctives of Southern culture is voluminous. See, for example, Clement Eaton, The Growth of Southern Civilization, 1790-1860. (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), and Clement Eaton, The

would lead to the disruption of the Federal Union and the tragedy of the Civil War. The purpose of the present work, therefore, is to investigate the relationship of Presbyterians in the South to these issues.

Our study begins with the establishment of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1789.[1] The terminal point of the study is the end of 1861, the date of the formation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.[2] We have limited our

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Mind of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964). A brief survey can be found in Arthur S. Link and R. W. Patrick, eds., Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965). See especially the chapter by Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "The Mind of the Antebellum South," pp. 198-223.

The literature on slavery is likewise very extensive. A stimulating survey of the subject, especially useful for historical and philosophical background, is David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970). Especially note pp. 187-247 and pp. 319-422.

[1]At that time there were five presbyteries in the Southern regions to be covered by this thesis, with 42 ministers and 166 churches reported. Altogether there were 16 presbyteries in the General Assembly, with 177 ministers, and 419 congregations. Membership statistics were not given. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Volume 1, (1789-1820), pp.14-21. General Assembly Minutes from 1789 through 1837 will hereafter be indicated as GA Minutes, followed by the date and page. General Assembly Minutes of the Old School after 1837 will be indicated by GA Minutes (O.S.); minutes for the New School will be indicated by GA Minutes (N.S.); minutes for the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (after 1861 called the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America) after 1857 will be indicated by GA Minutes (United). Minutes of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America will be indicated by GA Minutes (PCCSA).

[2]Hereafter abbreviated PCCSA. The Old School in the South in 1861 had 46 presbyteries organized into 10 synods, with 755 ministers and 1,157 churches; there were also 76,993 communicants reported, although it is generally acknowledged that such statistics were not necessarily precise or up to date. These figures include the Presbytery of Winchester, formerly attached to the Synod of Baltimore, the churches of which were in northern Virginia. Thomas Cary Johnson also included the Presbytery of Potomac as part of the PCCSA since a representative was present at the opening General Assembly of the PCCSA. However,

study to an examination of those areas which united to form the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in 1861, and have also included those churches which were connected with the United Synod of the South and which became part of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in 1864.[1] We have not, therefore discussed other groups in the South which claimed a Reformed heritage, such as the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church or the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. We likewise have not discussed the course of the Presbyterian churches in the border areas of Maryland, the District of Columbia, Kentucky, or Missouri. The history of the Church in these areas is a fascinating study in itself which has never been fully investigated, particularly in regard to the subjects of slavery and sectionalism.

The study is an important one for several reasons. It is significant first of all for an understanding of the history of the Southern Presbyterian Church, for that body presents a prime example of the way that an ecclesiastical group has been molded by its environment. By examining systematically the Church's reaction to Southern culture we can perhaps see more clearly how and why the Church developed the way it did.

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later statistical reports omit this; almost all churches of the Presbytery were in the District of Columbia. Thomas Cary Johnson, A History of the Southern Presbyterian Church, The American Church History Series, Vol. XI. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894), p. 482. (Johnson's work was the first attempt at a history of Southern Presbyterians, and is mainly concerned with the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America and its successor, The Presbyterian Church in the United States. The work contains much valuable information, but is strongly biased in its defense of the Southern Church.)

[1]The United Synod in 1861 had three synods and fifteen presbyteries, with 130 ministers and 199 churches. 11,581 communicants were claimed by the United Synod. (United Synod Statistics are taken from Thomas Cary Johnson, op. cit., p. 438; we have not had access to original minutes for 1861).

Second, various aspects of the study throw new light upon important areas of antebellum society. The role of the Church in the religious instruction of the slave, for example, has never been fully investigated, and yet this movement had its influence not only upon the Church but upon Southern society generally.

A further reason is that the Church was not only influenced by Southern society, but in turn exerted an influence on the thinking of that society. Although Presbyterians were numerically inferior to the Baptists and Methodists in the South, they exerted an influence far greater than their numbers would indicate. The rigid educational requirements for Presbyterian clergymen meant that the Presbyterian pastor was often the best educated man in his community, and was looked upon with respect by many who had no formal association with the Church. Also, Presbyterians were extremely active in education and were responsible for the training of innumerable Southern leaders who were not Presbyterians.[1] Presbyterians themselves often tended to be leaders in their communities. For several decades after the Revolutionary War Presbyterianism virtually had a monopoly

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[1]For example, graduates of Moses Waddel's Willington Academy, in South Carolina, included a dozen members of Congress (including John C. Calhoun and William H. Crawford) and many governors and judges. A sketch of Waddel's life will be found in William B. Sprague, ed., Annals of the American Pulpit; on Commemorative Notices of Distinguished Clergymen of Various Denominations. (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1858), Vol. 4, pp. 63-71. More thorough is Ralph M. Lyon, "Moses Waddel and the Willington Academy," North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. 8 (1931), pp. 284-299; Lyon includes a list of distinguished graduates on p. 297. For an able survey of Presbyterian efforts in Southern education see Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, Volume One, 1607-1861 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963) passim, especially p. 235-273 and 471-500. Also see Walter B. Posey, The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838 (Richmond: John knox Press, 1952), pp. 49-60. A more general survey is Albea Godbold, The Church College of the Old South (Durham: Duke University Press, 1944).

among the upper classes who were communicants of a Church, since the Episcopalians were in disfavor because of their ties with the Anglican Church before the War. Further influence was exerted by the widely-circulated Presbyterian periodicals; unlike the pulpit, they often felt under little necessity to restrain from comment on political and social matters and had an incalcuable influence on their readers throughout the South. The cumulative effect of the Church on Southern society is impossible to weigh with accuracy, but the influence was deep and continuing.

There have been previous attempts to examine certain aspects of the relationship between Southern Presbyterians and their society. The definitive history of Ernest Trice Thompson includes several chapters which survey the Southern Presbyterian relationship to the Negro and the institution of slavery.[1] There will be points at which the present writer will differ from Thompson's interpretations, but his book remains the most valuable and complete history of the Southern Presbyterian Church, and is a mine of information to which all students of Presbyterian history must acknowledge their indebtedness. Walter B. Posey's volume includes two brief chapters on slavery and the Negro, but is limited to the Old Southwest, and does not extend past 1838.[2] Neither Thompson nor Posey discuss in any detail the relation of Presbyterians to Southern sectionalism. More satisfactory in some ways is the work of Margaret Burr DesChamps, who includes both a chapter on slavery and a chapter on

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[1]E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 204-211; 323-349.

[2]Walter B. Posey, op. cit., pp. 73-92. Part of Posey's work will also be found in "The Slavery Question in the Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest," Journal of Southern History, Vol. 15, pp. 311-324.

sectionalism.[1] Her study is limited to the South Atlantic States, and does not take adequate notice of the position of the various Southern Presbyterian newspapers, but is, nevertheless, suggestive of the general stance of Southern Presbyterians during the period. Other recent works which deal with Presbyterians and the slavery question include the theses by Engelder[2] and Taylor.[3] The latter is especially valuable, although restricted to a limited period and not exclusively concerned with Southern Presbyterians. Also useful is the general surevey of Andrew Murray, part of which covers our period.[4] Of a slightly different order is the work of Watkin, which includes good background material on the nature of the Presbyterian minister during the period, and deals briefly with attitudes toward slavery.[5] Other works will be noted in the course of our discussion.

Valuable as these works have been in understanding Southern Presbyterians and their relationship to Southern society, there still remain many gaps in our understanding of the subject.

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[1]Margaret Burr DesChamps, "The Presbyterian Church in the South Atlantic States, 1801-1861", Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, 1952. See pp. 135-162; 180-208.

[2]C. J. Engelder, "The Churches and Slavery", Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1964.

[3]Hubert V. Taylor, "Slavery and the Deliberations of the Presbyterian General Assembly, 1833-1838", Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1964. Taylor's interest is especially in the area of speech and rhetoric; he includes, therefore, a careful analysis of the speeches given in the General Assembly.

[4]Andrew Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966). See especially pp. 15-28; 46-75.

[5]Robert N. Watkin, Jr., "The Forming of the Southern Presbyterian Minister: From Calvin to the American Civil War", Ph.D. thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1969. A survey of the nature of the Presbyterian minister from 1789 through 1860 will be found on pp. 253-464; for attitudes on slavery see especially pp. 444-450.

While some aspects of the Southern Presbyterian relation to slavery have received adequate attention, there still exists no comprehensive attempt to survey the total relation of the Church to the institution of slavery. Much less work has been done on Southern Presbyterians and the sectional struggle. The course of the New School in the South, particularly in relation to slavery and secession, has likewise received little attention. Subjects such as the role of Southern Presbyterians in the religious instruction of the slaves and the African colonization movement have also needed further study. Differences in attitudes between various sections of the Southern Church have also tended to be overlooked. It is hoped that the present work will help fill some of these gaps.

The essence of our thesis is that Southern Presbyterian attitudes on both slavery and secession underwent a marked change in response to definite secular and ecclesiastical pressures, and that the steps in this change can be identified with some precision. Our work is divided into three main parts. After an introductory chapter, which seeks to explore the relation of Presbyterians in the South to their culture before 1789, Part One begins with a study of the Southern Presbyterian understanding of the relationship of the Church to society. This section begins in 1789 and continues until the beginning in each geographical area of what we have termed "the period of transition". This latter date, we shall suggest, is different for each area, beginning about 1819 in South Carolina and Georgia, 1827 in North Carolina and Virginia, and about 1831 for the Old Southwest. We shall examine especially the Southern Presbyterian understanding of Church-State relations and the place of religion in society, and the relation of Southern Presbyterians to emerging nationalism. We shall contend that Southern Presbyterians generally took a national stance

in this period, and believed that the Church, although strictly separate from the State, was the necessary foundation for a stable society.

Part One will continue with an examination of Southern Presbyterian attitudes toward the institution of slavery in the early period. We will look at the viewpoints represented in various ecclesiastical actions in the South, and then see the views of various significant individual Presbyterians. We shall further note the various reactions of Southern Presbyterians to slavery, including instances of those who left the South because of slavery, as well as the support given the African colonization movement by Southern Presbyterians. We shall note in this section that many Southern Presbyterians openly expressed disapproval of slavery in this early period, and suggest that the period is characterized by diversity of thought on slavery.

Part Two of the present work consists of four chapters. The first three chapters examine the transition of Southern Presbyterian thinking on slavery, from the diversity found in the early period to a virtual unanimity of pro-slavery opinion by the end of the period of transition. The first chapter suggests that the transition began earliest in the South Carolina-Georgia area, and received its initial impetus (about 1819) especially from secular events. The transition is reinforced in that area by further secular developments, notably the nullification crisis and the rise of militant abolitionism in the North. the transition is completed by Southern Presbyterian reaction to the threat of slavery agitation in the General Assembly during the Old School-New School controversy.

The second chapter suggests a somewhat similar pattern in the North Carolina-Virginia area. We shall conclude that the period of transition began later in this area, about 1827, and that the initial impetus came largely from threatened agitation within the General

Assembly. As in the South Carolina-Georgia area, the transition was reinforced by the reaction to the Nat Turner Rebellion and the rise of abolitionism. In like manner, the renewed threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly led to a virtual unanimity of opinion on slavery among Presbyterians in these states.

A third chapter examines the transition in the area of the Old Southwest. We shall suggest that the transition started later in these areas, beginning with a response to the secular forces of the early 1830's and ending with the reaction to the ecclesiastical pressures of the later 1830's. We shall also note that East Tennessee, more than any other area, maintained its independence of thought on slavery, and that much anti-slavery thinking can be detected there throughout the period.

A final chapter in Part Two examines the Southern Presbyterian relationship to Southern and American society during the period of transition in the various areas. We shall note that although Southern Presbyterians were subjected to strong pressures to adopt a sectional stance during this time, they generally refused to do so. We shall suggest that the reasons for this were partly theological, relating to the Presbyterian commitment to a stable society.

Part Three examines the period from 1840 to the end of 1861. The first chapter deals with Southern Presbyterian thought and action during the 1840's. We shall note that the unanimous opinion on slavery turned them increasingly toward the position of being strong apologists for slavery and Southern culture. We shall see also their response to various ecclesiastical and secular pressures on slavery. A further part of this chapter will look at Southern Presbyterians and sectionalism in the 1840's. We shall note some weakening in their position, although in general they still affirmed a national stance.

The second chapter of Part Three looks at Southern Presbyterians during the stormy period of the 1850's. We shall contend that, just as the 1820's and 1830's marked a period of transition in thinking on slavery, so the 1850's marked the period of transition in thinking on sectionalism. From 1850 through 1852 a noticable change in attitude began to emerge, as Southern Presbyterians identified closely with the feelings of a beleaguered South. This increasingly-sectional stance is reinforced by the events from 1853 through 1856, and in the period from 1857 through 1859 Southern Presbyterians come to take an almost completely Southern viewpoint in the issues of the day.

The final chapter notes the factors which led to a totally sectional Church. Southern Presbyterian reaction to the election of Lincoln is examined, as is the response to the beginning of hostilities between North and South. We then turn to the final break between the Presbyterians of the South and their colleagues in the North, with the events leading up to formation of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.

An appendix examines a topic related to our immediate concern, the religious instruction of the slave population by Southern Presbyterians. After looking at the problems inherent in slave missions, we note the various motives and methods which characterized such efforts. We then seek to demonstrate the importance of slave missions in molding Southern Presbyterian attitudes about slavery, as well as the impact of the movement on the institution of slavery.

We have drawn upon a variety of sources, including minutes and records of various Church judicatories. We have likewise surveyed virtually all extant files of Southern Presbyterian periodi-

cals and newspapers, as well as a wide selection of other types of printed and manuscript materials which have only recently become known to students of Presbyterian history, including diaries, journals, and letters, and which are here surveyed for the first time.

Several words should be said about our format. Quotations from older sources and manuscript materials often reflect archaic or incorrect spellings; careful attempts have been made in transcribing to preserve the exact spelling of the originals. Thus, only rarely have we used the term "sic" to indicate misspellings. Otherwise, spelling in the body of the thesis will conform to the Third Edition of Webster.[1] The format of footnotes follows wherever feasible the rules of Turabian.[2]

It is impossible to acknowledge my debt to the many people who have aided me in one way or another in the preparation of this thesis. Nevertheless, there are several individuals who have especially given of themselves in the course of my work. First of all I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my advisors, Professor A. C. Cheyne, Professor George Shepperson, and Dr. Andrew Ross. Each has helped and encouraged me in innumerable ways, and I shall always be grateful to them for their wisdom and guidance, as well as their encouragement. A word of appreciation is also due my former colleagues in the Department of Bible at Belhaven College and in the Presbytery of Mississippi (United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), and my present associates at Montreat-Anderson College for continued encouragement. My parents,

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[1]Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged. Philip Babcock Gove, editor-in-chief. (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1969.)

[2]Kate L. Turbian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

Mr. and Mrs. Byron L. Akers, Sr., have likewise been of immeasurable help. Above all I am grateful to my wife, Anne, for her deep interest, constant encouragement, and steadfast patience and help during the entire period of study.

I would also note with deep appreciation the aid of a number of institutions during my visits. Of special help has been the staff of the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, North Carolina, during my extended period there. Director Kenneth J. Foreman, Jr., Director-Emeritus Thomas H. Spence, Jr., and Mrs. Mary Lane have especially been helpful. Mrs. Martha Aycock of Union Theological Seminary (Virginia) is also due a special note of gratitude. In addition, I am indebted to the staffs of the following institutions during my visits to them: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia; The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; The Colorado College; The University of Southwestern Louisiana; Louisiana State University; Tulane University; State of Mississippi Department of Archives; Reformed Theological Seminary; Columbia Theological Seminary; Emory University; University of Georgia; State of Georgia Department of Archives; The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; William and Mary College; Duke University; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; University of South Carolina; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division; New College Library, Edinburgh; The Mitchell Library, Glasgow; University of Edinburgh; National Library of Scotland; and the Presbyterian Historical Society of England.

My appreciation is also due to the Presbyterian Historical Society, the University of Georgia, and the University of South Carolina for providing microfilm copies of certain rare items.

INTRODUCTION: PRESBYTERIANS IN THE SOUTH BEFORE 1789

Early Presbyterianism and Slavery in Virginia and North Carolina

Early Presbyterians and Slavery in the Carolina Lowlands

Early Presbyterians and Slavery in the Back Country

The Synod of New York and Philadelphia and Slavery

Southern Presbyterians and Politics

INTRODUCTION

PRESBYTERIANS AND SOUTHERN SOCIETY BEFORE 1789

Before 1789 Presbyterianism was comparatively weak in the American South. Nevertheless, Presbyterians had been present in various areas for many decades, and attitudes which became prominent at a later date can already be discerned during the colonial period. We therefore begin our study of Presbyterians and Southern society by examining briefly the relationship of the Church to its Southern environment before 1789. Presbyterians tended to be concentrated in three areas in the South, particularly toward the end of the colonial period: the Virginia Chesapeake area, the Carolina lowlands, and the frontier back country (especially the Valley of Virginia).[1] We shall discuss each of these areas separately.

Puritans of Presbyterian sympathies had been responsible for a large percentage of the early colonists in Virginia. By 1643, however, the strongly anti-Puritan governor of the colony, Sir William Berkeley, had secured passage of an act in the Virginia General Assembly expelling all ministers who refused to conform to the Anglican forms.[2] While some groups definitely retained their Presbyterian

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[1]See E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 11-51 for a summary of the early history of Presbyterians in each of these areas during the colonial period.

[2]The text of the act is reprinted in William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical (First Series), (originally published 1850; reprinted Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966.) Hereafter referred to as Foote, Va. (1st). A summary of the attitude of the English Government toward dissenting groups in Virginia during the Seventeenth Century will be found in Delemo L. Beard, Origin and Early History of Presbyterianism in Virginia (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1932), pp. 44-51.

convictions, on the whole most colonists found it easier either to associate with the Anglican Church or leave the colony for Maryland, where there were various Presbyterian settlements.

To Francis Makemie is given credit for the first successful establishment of Presbyterian congregations in Virginia.[1] A native of Ulster, Makemie had been ordained by the Presbytery of Laggan; Schlenther suggests that "there is a possibility that his presbytery had ordained him, sine titulo, as an evangelist for the American colonies."[2] At any rate, he arrived in America in 1683, and in the same year visited Virginia. The details of his work in Maryland, Barbados, and Virginia are beyond our present concern; suffice it to say that he spent considerable time in Virginia, married the daughter of a wealthy Virginia merchant and landowner, and was able to secure a license as a dissenting preacher from the colonial authorities.

Two things are of special interest about Makemie in our study. In the first place, he was a slaveholder during much of his residency in Virginia, both by inheritance and purchase. His wife had inherited four slaves from her father upon his death in 1698.[3] Makemie also received a large section of land in the inheritance, to which he added other sections in the following years; by 1704 he was the second largest landowner in his county.[4] An inventory of his estate after his death in 1708 indicated that he owned over thirty

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1 The most thorough and scholarly study of Makemie is in Boyd S. Schlenther, The Life and Writings of Francis Makemie, (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Historical Society, 1971), pp. 13-28. Details of his life are also summarized by E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 20-25; Foote, Va. (1st), pp. 40-84; and Beard, op. cit., pp. 61-107.

2 Ibid., p. 14.

3 "Records Relating to Makemie: Will of William Anderson," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 21. The will is also quoted by Foote, Va. (1st), p. 44.

4 Schlenther, op. cit., p. 272.

slaves.[1]

Whether or not Makemie made any attempt at converting his slaves to the Christian faith is uncertain. In one pamphlet he wrote to encourage the cultivation of Virginia's commercial potential, he noted that many people had come to look down on the colony. He then proceeded to suggest the proper remedy:

> ...so nothing would more effectually wipe off such scandalous Imputations, than by promoting and encouraging Education and Vertue, checking and discountenancing Vice or Immorality in all, from the Highest to the Lowest, by the Example of a severe and vertous Conversation, in Governors and Counsellors, and promoting a Reformation of Manners, in putting all our Penal Laws in due Execution, encouraging the strictest Justice in all our Judicatures, and in propagating the true Knowledge of the Christian Religion to all Pagans, whether Indians or Negroes: All which has been lamentably neglected, even by such as have pretended to the highest pitch of Zeal.[2]

It would be claiming too much to say that this meant Makemie had made a concerted effort at the evangelization of slaves, for there is no evidence for this. The statement is interesting, however, on two counts: first, Makemie includes slaves as the proper objects of Christian evangelism, and second, he feels free to criticize his contemporaries for failing to carry out this task.[3]

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[1]"Records Relating to Makemie: Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of Mr. Francis Makemie," Journal of Presbyterian History, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 165-193.

[2]/Francis Makemie/, A Plain and Friendly Persuasive to the Inhabitants of Virginia and Maryland, for Promoting Towns and Cohabitation, (originally published 1705; reprinted in Schlenther, op. cit., p. 139. Makemie gave as a major advantage of the establishment of towns the fact that religion would be more easily advanced: "But in Towns Congregations are never wanting, and Children and Servants never are without Opportunity of Hearing, who can travel many Miles to hear, and be catechised...." Op. cit., p. 146. It seems likely, however, that he has in mind indentured servants rather than slaves, since the two are distinguished elsewhere.

[3]In the same pamphlet Makemie also expresses disapproval of the rapid growth in the slave population, which he felt was caused by too much economic dependence on tobacco planting: "Consider what a growing People we are in our selves, and how greedily we encrease the number of our Servants and Slaves, as fast as Opportunity presents, and what will it be in a little time, if we are not diverted by something else." Ibid.,

The quotation is of significance for another reason. The pamphlet from which it is taken was written by Makemie to encourage the development of towns in the plantation society of Virginia and Maryland, and included a criticism of the colonists for their failure to consider the long range development of their society. Again, we must be careful not to claim too much for Makemie, but concern for a well ordered society and a conviction that a Christian minister had the right (and even obligation) to criticise the social structure were to become common among Southern Presbyterians. As we shall see, it would only be after the rise of the slavery controversy in the 1830's that this conviction would change.

After Makemie's death there were no surviving Presbyterian congregations in Eastern Virginia for some years. The first Presbyterian minister to settle in the area was Samuel Davies, who came to Hanover County in the spring of 1747, ordained as an evangelist by the New Side Presbytery of New Castle. In spite of difficulties with the civil authorities, he had a successful ministry before leaving Virginia in 1759 to assume the presidency of the College of New Jersey, and was the first moderator of the Presbytery of Hanover, the first Presbytery organized in the South.[1]

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p. 150. This was not, however, a condemnation against slavery in itself, but only against the dangers it might present to a well ordered society. Foote estimated the slave population at the time of Makemie's settlement in Virginia at approximately one-twentieth of the total population. Foote, Va. (1st),p. 23. It should also be remembered that slavery was not confined to the South during most of the colonial period, and was generally accepted as a legitimate practice, little different from the indenture of Anglo-Saxons as servants for a set period in payment for their passage to the colonies.

[1]The only adequate biography of Davies is George William Pilcher, Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971). Foote devotes a long section to him, and includes many valuable extracts from source documents, op. cit., pp. 157-307. The contemporary account of American revivals by John Gillies includes a section on Davies, with the text of a letter from Davies to

To Davies goes credit for beginning the work among Presbyterians of evangelizing slaves. Generally the Anglican Church did little for the slaves, and in some instances opposed any work among them.[1] The English dissenter Benjamin Fawcett credited Davies with being the first minister of any denomination to have widespread success among black slaves in the colony.[2] He apparently preached to both whites and blacks from the first of his ministry in Hanover, and by 1751 he estimated he preached regularly to at least a hundred blacks, of whom "I have baptized about forty of them within these three years, upon such profession of faith, as I then judged credible.[3] By 1755 the number had increased to about 300 regular hearers, 100 of whom had been baptized "after a proper time for instruction, and having given

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Rev. Joseph Bellamy describing his work. John Gillies, Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel, and Eminent Instruments Employed in Promoting It, (Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1754), Vol. 2, pp. 330-338. Extended sections on Davies were also included in John Holt Rice (ed.), The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 2 (1819), pp. 112-119; 186-188; 201-217; 329-335; 353-363; 474-479; 560-567. E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 53-61; Beard, op. cit., pp. 343-367; and Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1911), pp. 44-57 also contain brief accounts. See also Wesley M. Gewehr, The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930), pp. 68-105. Davies' diary of his trip to Great Britain to secure funds for the College of New Jersey has recently been published from the manuscript portions in the libraries of Princeton University and Union Theological Seminary (Richmond). George William Pilcher (ed.) The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753-55, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

[1]For an example of opposition see Gewehr, op. cit., p. 235.

[2]Cited in Ibid., p. 235. For a survey of the work of the various religious groups in Virginia among the slaves in this period, see Gewehr's discussion, pp. 235-250.

[3]Samuel Davies to Joseph Bellamy, June 28, 1751, in Gillies, op. cit., p. 335. He further states that his congregation at this time included over 300 whites. It should be noted that slaves attended the same service as the whites, although they apparently sat in their own section of the meeting house.

credible evidence, not only of their acquaintance with the important doctrines of the Christian religion, but also a deep sense of them upon their minds, attested by a life of strict piety and holiness...."[1]

As this quotation would indicate, Davies was scrupulous about admitting slaves into the Church, and only did so after a period of instruction.[2] One interesting aspect of this was his effort to circulate books and pamphlets among the slaves to aid in their religious instruction. He made appeals to the "Society in London for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor" for various religious books, which were sent in quantity.

> When the books arrived, I gave public notice of it, after sermon, at the next opportunity, and desired such negroes as could read, and such white people as would make a good use of them, and were so poor that they could not buy such books, to come to me, at my house, and I should distribute them amongst them. ...For some time after this, the poor slaves, whenever they could get an hour's leisure from their masters, would hurry away to my house, and receive the charity....The good effects of this pious charity are already apparent.... It furnishes the most proper helps for such of the negroes as can read, and are piously disposed, and some of them are evidently improving in knowledge. It has excited others to learn to read; for as I give books to none but such as can read, and are piously disposed, they consider them as a reward for their industry; and I am told that in almost every house in my congregation, and in sundry other places, they spend every leisure hour in trying to learn, since they expect books as soon as they are capable to use them.[3]

Davies even considered setting up a printing press and writing

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[1]Samuel Davies to an unidentified member of the Society in London for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor, March, 1755, in Foote, Va. (1st), p. 285.

[2]He laments in his 1751 letter to Bellemy that "while my charge is so extensive, I cannot take sufficient pains with them for their instruction, which often oppresses my heart." In Gillies, loc. cit. How long the period of instruction was at this time is difficult to say, but by 1753 candidates for baptism "had been catechized for some months, and given credible evidences of their sincerely embracing the gospel." Appendix to Gillies' Historical Collections, quoted in The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 4, p. 539.

[3]Samuel Davies to an unidentified member.... March 2, 1756, in Foote, Va.(1st), pp. 288-290.

materials specifically for the slaves.[1]

Davies met with some opposition in his work,[2] but on the whole he found the slaves "are freely allowed to attend upon my ministry, and sometimes my private instructions, even by such masters as have no religion at all, or are Bigots to the established church."[3] One reason may be that he made it clear that he had no intention of disrupting the institution of slavery. Society, in his view, had certain God-given distinctions which were not to be disrupted.

> The Appointments of Providence, and the Order of the World, not only admit, but require, that there should be civil Distinctions among Mankind; that some should be masters and some Servants. And Christianity does not blend or destroy these Distinctions, but establishes and regulates them, and enjoins every man to conduct himself according to them.[4]

In addition, some masters undoubtedly found religious instruction of their slaves advantageous. "Indeed, it is the object of my zeal, not to make them dissenters, but good Christians and good servants."[5] He even suggested that the Christianizing of the slave population would be a safeguard against slave insurrections.[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 292.

[2] See Gewehr, op. cit., p. 96 for an example.

[3] Samuel Davies to an unidentified member.... March 2, 1756, in Foote, Va. (1st), p. 291.

[4] Samuel Davies, The Duty of Christians to Propagate Their Religion Among Heathens, Earnestly Recommended to the Masters of Negroe Slaves in Virginia. A Sermon Preached in Hanover, January 8, 1757. Quoted by Murray, op. cit., p. 11. According to Pilcher, Davies was himself a slaveholder, although apparently not on a large scale. George William Pilcher, Samuel Davies, Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia, p. 111.

[5] Samuel Davies to an unidentified member...in Foote, loc. cit., March 2, 1756.

[6] Ibid., p. 290.
Davies is of interest not only for his concern about the slaves, but for his attitude toward the government of Virginia. While there were times that he found himself, as a dissenting minister, in opposition to the civil authorities, he always sought to reach a solution within the framework of the law. Of more significance for our study, Davies

In summary, Davies in one sense accepted Southern society as he found it, and could even be said to have been a defender of that society. From another perspective, however, he was not a defender of the status quo, and sought to work within his society for its improvement. This was seen, however, basically as an improvement of the individuals within the society, rather than an attempt to change or directly influence the structures of society.

The importance of Davies for later Presbyterian efforts among slaves is twofold. First, he gave shape to much of the pattern of later slave evangelism. As Murray says:

> "The sermons and letters of Davies contain most of the appeals which were used by later missionaries to Negroes. By separating spiritual liberty from civil freedom, they found it possible to carry on their mission work within the framework of the slave system."[1]

Second, Davies was important for his influence on other men who would expand Presbyterian efforts among slaves in Virginia and other areas.

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was a strong patriot, and gave expression to his patriotism on various occasions. During a time of great dejection in Virginia due to the French and Indian War he preached several sermons designed to raise recruits for the fight. See, for example, "Religion and Patriotism the Constitutients of a Good Soldier" (Aug. 17, 1755); "The Crisis: or the uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at particular Times" (Oct. 28, 1756); "The Curse of Cowardice" (May 8, 1758). All will be found in Samuel Davies, Sermons on Important Subjects, (London: W. Baynes, 1804, Vol. 3), pp. 345-406. An early Southern Presbyterian magazine made this comment: "The ardent and active mind of Mr. Davies entered with a lively interest into the concerns of his country. Her prosperity and honour, her sufferings and her wrongs, he regarded as his own." Virginia Religious Magazine, Vol. 3, No. 5, September-October, 1807, p. 263.

[1]Andrew Murray, op. cit., p. 11. Later Southern Presbyterians took note of Davies' efforts. The Virginia Religious Magazine included a lengthy memoir of Davies and complimented his work among the slaves. Virginia Religious Magazine, (Vol. 3, No. 5, September-October, 1807), pp. 249-263; see especially p. 251. According to Stroupe this was the second religious magazine of any denomination in the South. Henry S. Stroupe, The Religious Press in the South Atlantic States, 1802-1865, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), p. 5.

Thirty years later the Southern Religious Telegraph devoted a series to Davies, and described his work among slaves in some detail. Southern Religious Telegraph, May 19, May 26, June 2, and June 9, 1837; see especially the May 26 issue.

It is to these men that we must now turn.

On December 3, 1755, the Presbytery of Hanover was formed. Besides Davies, who was moderator, the Presbytery consisted of three other men from Eastern Virginia.[1] Although the records are somewhat limited, each is known to have made efforts at the evangelization of the slave population. John Todd had almost as large a number of blacks in his congregation as Davies, but beyond that there is little precise knowledge of his work.[2] John Wright likewise met with success, as Davies indicated in a letter to England regarding the distribution of books that had been sent him:

> I sent a few of each sort to my friend and brother, Mr. Wright, minister in Cumberland, about ninety miles hence, where there is a great number of negroes, and not a few of them thoughtful, and inquisitive about Christianity, and sundry of them hopeful converts. He has been faithful in the distributing, and informs me they meet with a very agreeable and promising reception. He is very laborious in his endeavours to instruct the negroes, and has set up two or three schools among them, where they attend on Sundays, before and after sermon, for they have no other leisure time.[3]

Foote says that the fourth man, Robert Henry, "was successful in his preaching to the negroes, beyond any of his cotemporaries."[4] In one of the two churches in his charge it was estimated that there were more than one hundred black communicants, larger than the number of whites.[5]

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[1] In addition there were two New Side men from the Valley of Virginia in the west.

[2] "My worthy friend, Mr. Todd, minister of the next congregation, has near the same number under his instruction, who, he tells me, discover the same serious turn of mind." Samuel Davies, to an unidentified member.... March, 1755, in Foote, Va. (1st), p. 286.

[3] Ibid., March 2, 1756, p. 291.

[4] Foote, Va. (1st), p. 293.

[5] Walter L. Lingle, "Cub Creek Church; Its Place in History." Bulletin of Hampden-Sidney College, August, 1938, (Vol. 32, No. 3), p. 12. Later pastors of that church continued the work after Henry left in

Another man influenced by Davies was Henry Patillo,[1] who took his theological training under Samuel Davies and was ordained by the Presbytery of Hanover in 1758. After six years in various Virginia churches, he went to North Carolina, where he stayed until his death in 1801. Little is known of his ministry in Virginia, but it is clear that he made definite attempts to reach the slave population while in North Carolina, although the extent of his success is not known. Patillo's influence, however, extended beyond his immediate pastoral charge, for he was the author of an interesting pamphlet, printed in 1787, which gives great insight into the attitudes toward slavery among Southern Presbyterians near the end of this earliest period. Included was a catechism designed for the religious instruction of slaves; it is possibly the earliest Southern Presbyterian attempt at such a work.[2]

1767, and as late as 1819 John Holt Rice stated that the church had over one hundred black communicants. "Of these a very large proportion can read, and are instructed in religious doctrines and duties beyond many professors among white people." Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 2, p. 203 (1819).

[1]The name is also spelled "Pattillo." The most comprehensive account of Patillo is in William Henry Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, Historical and Biographical. Originally published 1846; reprinted by Synod of North Carolina, Raleigh, 1966. Hereafter abbreviated Foote, NC. A more recent account, drawing upon the scanty number of papers of Patillo which have survived, is Durwood T. Stokes, "Henry Pattillo in North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. 44 (1967), pp. 373-391. It unaccountably omits any reference to Patillo's work with slaves or his Plain Planter's Family Assistant. Other sketches will be found in Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 196-199; also Robert Hamlin Stone, A History of Orange Presbytery 1770-1970. (Greensboro, North Carolina: Orange Presbytery, 1970), pp. 13-14. Stone's work is unfortunately marred by a lack of documentation.

[2]Henry Patillo, The Plain Planter's Family Assistant; Containing an Address to Husbands and Wives, Children and Servants; with some Helps for Instruction by Catechisms; and Examples of Devotion for Families: with a brief Paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer. (Wilmington: James Adams, 1787.) The catechism was apparently not published separately, as it is not listed by Trinterud. (Leonard J. Trinterud, A Bibliography of American Presbyterianism during the Colonial Period. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1968.) The original manuscript of the catechism has been discovered in archives of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond.

Four things are of special interest about Patillo and his views. First, there is some indication of a slightly different attitude toward slavery from those of an earlier period. He suggested, for example, that slavery was rapidly becoming unprofitable, and seemed to hint that its days were numbered.

> The avarice of the British merchants, sent them, or their father's [sic] to America. This wicked branch of trade, found ready encouragement with the planters, while the country was a boundless forest; and the labour of the slaves was deemed necessary to clear and subdue it. But conscientious or prudential motives, have pretty generally prevailed among us, to discourage the importation of slaves; and the bulk of our inhabitants consider them as a formidable encumbrance, rather than an advantage to the country, in the present exhausted state of the soil, and encreasing difficulty of the seasons.[1]

Patillo also had some thoughts about emancipation, although the idea did not linger with him for any length of time apparently.

> The subject of manumission will greatly injure our interest as a church. I once touched it with caution: it offended some, & pleased none; tho' I mentioned it as a very distant object.[2]

He furthermore gave this counsel to his black readers:

> I wish them to know, that they are by no means their friends, who put freedom into their heads. This is an event, that all the wisdom of America seems at present unequal to; but which divine providence will accomplish in due time: and then, how to provide for them, and what to do with them, will be questions easily solvable, though neither you nor I can answer them at this time.[3]

While his thoughts may appear timid at best, it is at least significant that he felt slavery would eventually come to an end.

A second aspect of Patillo's views was his insistence on the duty of masters to take care of their slaves. The slaves of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

[2] Henry Patillo to William Williamson, December 4, 1799, MS letter, The Shane Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society. The reference may very possibly be to the statements in The Plain Planter's Family Assistant which we have given here.

[3] Patillo, op. cit., p. 23.

master who followed his advice would be "among the happiest of human beings. Well clothed, and well fed; a warm cabbin, and comfortable bedding; with their hearty thriving children growing up under their eye."[1] As a footnote to this, he debated whether or not the community should be forced to pay the price of any slave executed for a crime. Asserting that such crimes came about because of slaves who had run away from cruel masters, Patillo pled for understanding in such cases:

> He must live by plunder, for no one dares to employ him. An outlawry is procured. A hue and cry follows. Poor solitary wretch! the whole world are his enemies; and man and dogs beset him round. Whither shall he flee? To return to that inhuman, who, from the relation of a master, should be his protection, is to suffer forty deaths without dying. For I shall not easily believe that the pang of death is equal to a severe stroke with a hickory or cow-hide, on the naked human skin.... Friendless, and without defence, he falls a victim of public justice, for the crimes which severity drove him to perpetrate.[2]

This is also seen in another passage, which is remarkable also because it is found in the catechism written for slaves:

> Q. 38. Do not masters owe their slaves great duties too?
>
> A. Yes: masters should teach their slaves the doctrines and duties of religion--call them daily to the worship of God with them--set them all good examples--provide them with every thing necessary; require nothing but what is reasonable; and keep them from being abused by other people.[3]

A third aspect of Patillo is closely related to this, since it also involves the responsibility of a master to his slaves. This was his insistence on the duty of masters to instruct their slaves in the Christian faith. This was to be done whether the slaves themselves desired it or not.

> But no disposition in your children or servants, will excuse your neglecting the duties you owe to God and

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[1] Ibid., p. 22.

[2] Ibid., p. 22

[3] Ibid., p. 20.

> to them. They must have instruction, whether they hear or forbear; and God must be worshipped, though all the hearers in your family do not concur in it.[1]

To him, the duty was not only a command of God, but would tend to make slaves more willing to serve.

> "Perhaps, then, my friend, the truth is, that much of your servant's wickedness and deficiency is to be ascribed to your own negligence of the duties you owe to God and your household. Can you expect him to be virtuous and dutiful, without instruction, and example?"[2]

A further advantage of slave instruction, Patillo hinted, would be its long range effects on society. "I readily grant, that the omission of this duty of religious instruction to the slaves, is a great national evil; and the source of numerous others to society."[3]

A final aspect follows naturally from what has been said previously; not only do masters have duties to their slaves, but slaves have duties toward their masters. The most obvious duty was obedience, as the catechism for slaves made clear:

> Q. 37. When negroes become religious, how must they behave to their masters?
>
> A. The scriptures in many places command them, to be honest, diligent, and faithful in all things, and not to give saucy answers; and even when they are whipt for doing well, to take it patiently, and look to God for their reward.[4]

Closely related was the duty of the slave to be content with his station in life; upon inspection, the slave could see that his lot was not only given him by God, but was in reality a happier one than that of his master.

> Q. 40. Do you ever think you are happier than he?

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[1] Ibid., p. 28.

[2] Ibid., p. 25.

[3] Ibid., p. 25.

[4] Ibid., pp. 49-50.

A. Yes: when I come in from my work; eat my hearty supper, worship my makes; lie down without care on my mind; sleep sound; get up in the morning strong and fresh; and hear that my master could not sleep, for thinking on his debts, and his taxes; and how he shall provide victuals and clothes for his family, or what he shall do for them when they are sick--then I bless God that he has placed me in my humble station; I pity my master, and feel myself happier than he is.

Q. 41. Then it seems every body is best, just where God has placed them?

A. Yes: The Scriptures say, if I am called, being a slave, I am not to care for it; for every true christian, is Christ's free man, whether he be bond or free in this world.[1]

In addition, Christian slaves had other obligations, including praying for their masters,[2] and instructing their children in Christian duties.[3]

Another man of much significance who was influenced by Davies was David Rice.[4] Born in Hanover County in 1733, Rice apparently was influenced deeply by his parents, who, we are told, "would never own slaves; he because he considered it unprofitable; she, because she considered it morally wrong."[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 50.

[2] See Patillo's "Prayer for a Negroe," Ibid., p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 50.

[4] On David Rice see the biographical sketches in Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 246-249; William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical, Second Series, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1855), pp. 78-81 (hereafter referred to as Foote, Va. (2nd), and "A Biographical Sketch of David Rice," Danville Quarterly Review, Vol. 4, (1864), No. 2, pp. 274-309.. The fullest account of Rice's life is in Robert H. Bishop (ed.) An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky During a Period of Forty Years, Containing The Memoirs of Rev. David Rice, and Sketches of the Origin and Present State of Particular Churches, and of the Lives and Labours of a Number of Men who were Eminent and Useful in their Day. (Lexington: Thomas S. Skillman, 1824), pp. 13-115. The sketch in the Danville Quarterly Review is drawn largely from this work.

[5] "A Biographical Sketch of David Rice," Danville Quarterly Review, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1864), p. 275.

Rice was converted to Presbyterianism by Samuel Davies, and studied for the ministry under John Todd. He ministered to various churches in Virginia from 1762 to 1783 before leaving for Kentucky. His work there is technically beyond the scope of our present work, but it should be noted that he was one of the most significant men in the anti-slavery movement in that State; as a member of the convention called to draw a State constitution in 1792 he tried strenuously, without success, to have a program of gradual emancipation adopted.[1]

Rice, like his colleagues, was active in the religious instruction of the slaves during his time in Virginia. The extent of his work is unknown, although a later writer says that "his own impression was that his ministry accomplished more for the blacks than the whites."[2] It may also be contended that his views had some influence on his nephew, John Holt Rice, who would have significance in molding the views of slavery of Virginia Presbyterians in the early decades of the 19th Century.

Other Presbyterian efforts among the slave population in the Virginia-North Carolina area are difficult to assess. Foote quotes a letter dated September 5, 1755, of an unidentified layman in the so-called Northern Neck area of Virginia concerning his private efforts among the slaves. He says that he had encountered some opposition, but had found that religious instruction tended to make the slaves more obedient, and hoped this would silence his critics. He had obtained

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[1]Reviewed in Ibid., pp. 293-300.

[2]Ibid., p. 277. We have found no support for Andrew Murray's contentions that Rice was forced to leave Virginia because of his anti-slavery convictions, and that his twenty years in Virginia were devoted exclusively to slave evangelization. Murray, op. cit., p. 15. Rice himself was a slaveholder, refusing to free his slaves because of fear for their personal safety. Walter B. Posey, op. cit. p. 75. Rice's fullest exposition of his views of slavery are found in his pamphlet, A Kentucky Protest Against Slavery, Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy, reprinted in Robert H. Bishop (ed.), op. cit., p. 75.

books from a friend in Glasgow, and was encouraging some of the blacks to read.[1] Other than this, there is little indication concerning Presbyterian efforts with the slaves, but it seems reasonably certain that the tradition of Davies and his colleagues was generally maintained.[2]

Information on Presbyterians and their relationship to slavery in the other two areas of the South during the colonial period is less definite. In the Carolina lowlands Presbyterianism came from various sources--French Ruguenots, Dutch, English, Ulster Scots, and even Italians.[3] A large segment of Congregationalists came from New England to the Charleston area, and the history of Presbyterianism in South Carolina is intimately related to these New Englanders. In early colonial times Presbyterians--including Ruguenots and Congregationalists--accounted for 45 per cent of the population of South Carolina; Anglicans only claimed 42½ per cent.[4] As time went on, however, the Presbyterian influences deteriorated sharply under the pressure of an established Anglicanism. A Presbytery of Charleston was formed in 1722. Its history is obscure at points; it seems to have been made up mainly of conservative Scotsmen who were strict subscribers to the Westminster Confession and who refused to back revival measures.[5]

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[1]Foote, Va. (1st), pp. 358-359.

[2]John Holt Rice cited several examples of churches with a large number of black members in 1819, which could trace the beginnings of their work with slaves to Davies or his associates. Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 2, p. 203.

[3]A brief survey of the various groups which settled there can be found in E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 29-40. More exhaustive is George Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, (Columbia, S.C.: Duffie & Chapman, 1870). Reprinted by Synod of South Carolina, 1965. Volume One covers the period until 1800.

[4]The figures are quoted by E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 32, from an unnamed contemporary pamphlet.

[5]They apparently refused to back Whitefield when he visited Charleston.

Strictly speaking, the Presbytery of Charleston is outside the scope of our study, since it never was associated with any synod, such as the Synod of Philadelphia, and eventually went out of existence during the American Revolution. However, a few words are in order about those of Presbyterian background in the area and their relationship to their immediate culture.

Whether or not those of Presbyterian convictions in this area did much in the way of slave instruction during the colonial period is difficult to affirm. Howe asserts that the 1740's saw "great attention" being given to slave evangelism.[1] However, the examples he cites are not specifically of Presbyterian work. Much of the impetus for any work that was done seems to have come from Whitefield, who urged slave instruction and also condemned in strongest terms the mistreatment of slaves.[2] Howe recounts one instance of a man who, at the

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The Presbytery was split over the controversy about subscription to the Confession; two men who opposed strict subscription apparently withdrew. See E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 34, 38.

[1]Howe, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 246.

[2]"Whether it be lawful for Christians to buy slaves, I shall not take it upon me to determine, but sure I am that it is sinful, when bought, to use them worse than brutes. And I fear the generality of you, who own negroes, are liable to such a charge....Your dogs are caressed and fondled at your tables; but your slaves, who are frequently styled beasts or dogs, have not an equal privilege. They are scarce permitted to pick up the crumbs which fall from their masters' tables....Although I pray God the slaves may never be permitted to get the upper hand, yet should such a thing be permitted by Providence, all good men must acknowledge the judgment would be just." George Whitefield, A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Concerning their Negroes. Quoted by Arnold Dallimore, George Whitefield, (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), pp. 471-472. See Dallimore's chapter "Whitefield and the American Negro," pp. 495-510, for a survey of Whitefield's reaction to slavery. Whitefield bought a plantation in South Carolina, worked by slave labor, the proceeds of which went to support his Bethesda orphanage after 1747. Stuart Henry accuses Whitefield of turning against his earlier stand on slavery; it would seem better, however, to note that he did not condemn slavery itself, but only the evils of slavery; in his own mind he was probably not being inconsistent. Stuart C. Henry, George Whitefield, Wayfaring Witness, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp. 116-118. Dallimore's discussion is more thorough and balanced than

suggestion of Whitefield, undertook black evangelism in South Carolina. He was, however, apparently mentally unbalanced (at least for a time) and was charged by a grand jury with plotting some type of slave insurrection against Charleston.[1]

That there was some definite work by Presbyterians among slaves is shown by a letter of a Presbyterian pastor, dated April 19, 1754.

> There is a good old gentleman in Charleston, of our denomination, who for many years past has spent the morning and evening of every Lord's day in teaching the poor Negroes to read, and instruct them in the principles of religion....About 8 or 9 years ago he was put in prison for this good work, under pretence of being a nusance to the neighbourhood by assembling the Negroes at his house, to sing psalms, etc. But as there was no law by which this mischief could be well framed, much less supported, he was dismissed after a little while, and has since met with no disturbance.--The second is a Minister about 14 miles distant from any settlement, a gracious humble man, of a true catholick spirit.--The third is a young man of my own church, of great piety, and well qualified for the instruction of the Negroes.... He was ingaged last summer by the executors of two large estates, about 30 miles from my settlement, to instruct the Negroes in the plantations under their care.... Each of these three persons assure me in their letters, that they have faithfully distributed the books I sent them, which were received by the Negroes with great thankfulness....[2]

We have quoted the passage at length partly because it is the most detailed passage we have found describing Presbyterian work among slaves in the Carolinas, and partly because of several interesting features it contains. The imprisonment of the first individual is unique, as far as we have been able to determine. The hiring of the

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Henry's; at the time of writing, the second volume of Dallimore has not appeared, but it will presumable discuss in detail Whitefield's relations with slavery in connection with his work in the South.

[1] G. Howe, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 244-246. The charge was later dismissed.

[2] "Letter to Mr. Forsitt from Mr. Hutson at Indian Land, S. Carolina, 19th April, 1754" in Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 4 (1821), pp. 549-550. According to Howe, Hutson was pastor of the Stoney Creek Independent Presbyterian Church. The individual referred to in the previous footnote was a member of his church; whether or not he is the same individual mentioned in the above letter is impossible to tell. Howe, op. cit., pp. 248-249.

third man by plantations is likewise of interest, and is a pattern that would become common later. It is also worthy of note that two of the three men were laymen. This early tradition of slave instruction is especially significant since the greatest impetus for this work among Southern Presbyterians of a later period would come from South Carolina and Georgia.

One other fact needs to be noted concerning Presbyterians and slavery in the Carolina lowlands. The strongest condemnation of slavery of this period from a Southern Presbyterian pen was written by Alexander Hewatt, pastor of the First (Scotch) Presbyterian Church of Charleston. He wrote an early history of South Carolina and Georgia in which he strongly condemned slavery.[1] Three aspects of his argument are worthy of note. First, he condemned the slave trade; speaking of the introduction of slaves into the colonies, he says:

> About the same time a traffic in the human species, called Negroes, was introduced into England; which is one of the most odious and unnatural branches of trade the sordid and avaricious mind of mortals ever invented ....Hence arose that horrid and inhuman practice of dragging Africans into slavery; which has since been so pursued, in defiance of every principle of justice and religion....according to the common mode in which it has been conducted, we must confess it is a difficult matter to conceive a single argument in its defence. It is contrary to all laws of nature and nations.... And though policy has given countenance and sanction to the trade, yet every candid and impartial man must confess, that it is atrocious and unjustifiable in every light in which it can be viewed, and turns mer-

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[1]Alexander Hewatt, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia. (London: Alexander Donaldson, 1779.) Two Volumes. E. T. Thompson says it was the earliest history of South Carolina, although he incorrectly gives the date of publication as 1799. Op. cit., p. 43. Little is known of Hewatt; he apparently assumed the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston in 1763, and left in 1776, probably because of his sympathy with the British Crown. Brief sketches of his life and ministry in Charleston will be found in Howe, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 318-319; 402-404; and Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 250-254.

> chants into a band of robbers, and trade into atrocious acts of fraud and violence.[1]

Hewatt further condemned the treatment of slaves in the colonies:

> After their arrival they are sold and delivered over to the colonists, to whose temper, language and manners they are utter strangers; where their situation for some time, in case of harsh usage, is little better than that of the dumb beasts, having no language but groans in which they can express their pains, nor any friend to pity or relieve them....All laws framed with respect to them, give their masters such authority over them as is under few limitations....their condition of life evidently subjects them to harsh usage even from the best of masters, and we leave the world to judge what they have to expect from the worst.[2]

More basically, however, Hewatt attacked the institution of slavery itself, and not just its evils:

> Upon the slightest reflection all men must confess, that those Africans, whom the powers of Europe have conspired to enslave, are by nature equally free and independent, equally susceptible of pain and pleasure, equally averse from bondage and misery, as Europeans themselves....It is impossible that the Author of nature ever intended human beings for such a wretched state; for surely he who gave life, gave also an undoubted right to the means of self-preservation and happiness, and all the common rights and privileges of nature....Every argument that can be brought in support of the institution of slavery, tends to the subversion of justice and morality in the world. The best possible treatment from the colonists cannot compensate for so great a loss. Freedom, in its meanest circumstances, is infinitely preferable to slavery, though it were in golden fetters, and accompanied with the greatest splendour, ease, and abundance.[3]

Whether or not Hewatt allowed his views to be known during his time in Charleston is impossible to say. He indicates that he started writing the book while still in Charleston, although it was published in 1779, about three years after he left the colony. He continued to maintain contact with some of his old parishoners in Charleston as late as 1820, so his printed views must not have cut him off completely

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[1]Hewitt, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 20, 24, 25-26.

[2]Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 93, 94.

[3]Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 92, 95, 102.

from them.[1] Thus, although his contemporary influence is impossible to assess, he is an interesting sidelight in the history of a state that would later furnish some of the strongest Presbyterian apologists for slavery.

Of Presbyterian relations to society in the so-called Back Country--generally the Valley of Virginia and the Piedmont of the Carolinas--much less can be said. This area was settled mainly by the Scotch-Irish, who came through Pennsylvania into the Valley of Virginia, and then down into the Piedmont regions.[2] Slavery did not become prevalent among them in the colonial period; it has been estimated that in 1763 the Valley of Virginia contained 20,000 white residents and only 1,000 blacks.[3] This group of Scotch-Irish constituted a major mission field for the Presbyterian Church, but, in spite of a Presbyterian heritage, Churches grew slowly on the Southern frontier. There is indication that Presbyterians in these areas generally had few qualms about slavery, and made at least some attempt to include their few slaves in their religious activities. The Tinkling

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[1]Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 252. He died about 1828.

[2]For a summary of migrations into these areas by Presbyterians see E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 41-51. A popular account of Scotch-Irish migration, useful in some respects, is J. G. Craighead, Scotch and Irish Seeds in American Soil: The Early History of the Scotch and Irish Churches, and their Relations to the Presbyterian Church of America. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1878), see especially pp. 265-348. Standard histories of the movement include: James G. Leyburn, The Scotch-Irish: A Social History, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962.) Henry J. Ford, The Scotch-Irish in America, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915.) Charles A. Hanna, The Scotch-Irish, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), 2 Volumes. None of these, however, deal in any detail with the relation of the Scotch-Irish in the South to slavery.

[3]Howard McKnight Wilson, The Lexington Presbytery Heritage, (Verona, Virginia: McClure Press, 1971), p. 51.

Spring Church, the first Presbyterian church to have a settled pastor in the Valley, had a section reserved for its blacks sometime after 1748.[1] John Craig, the first Presbyterian pastor to settle in the Valley, is known to have owned slaves; James Patton, an officer in the church, likewise owned slaves.[2] In all probability the same general pattern prevailed in other churches.

It is of some interest that at least one significant anti-slavery man came from western Virginia during this period. Samuel Doak had been born in Augusta County, Virginia, in 1749. He was licensed to preach by Hanover Presbytery in 1777, and spent a short time preaching in Washington County, which borders on present day Tennessee in Southwestern Virginia. He then moved to eastern Tennessee, where he was the first Presbyterian minister to reside in the area. His significance lies in the fact that he developed strong anti-slavery feelings which he communicated to some of the students he trained for the ministry, including David Nelson, Gideon Blackburn and John Rankin. Each of these would later have contributions to make to the anti-slavery movement.[3]

It should also be mentioned that by 1789 the Presbyterian Church on a national level had been forced to deal with the question of slavery on two occasions. In 1777 the Synod of New York and Philadelphia considered an overture concerning the sending of two blacks to Africa as missionaries; along with it the committee on overtures was to prepare a statement on slavery.

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[1]Howard McKnight Wilson, The Tinkling Spring, Headwater of Freedom, (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1954), p. 96.

[2]Ibid., pp. 140-141.

[3]See Infra, pp. 79-82; also see p.86 .On Doak see Sprague, Op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 392-397, and Foote, N. C. pp. 309-311.

> The committee appointed to prepare an overture on the representation from Dr. Stiles and the Reverend Samuel Hopkins, and also on the subject on negro slavery, brought in a draught, the first part of which being read and amended, was approved....But some difficulties attending the discussion of the second part of that overture, the Synod agree to defer the affair to our next meeting.[1]

The Revolutionary War intervened, however, and the subject was not considered until ten years later. As Murray notes, "This hesitation of the synod, on the eve of the Revolution, shows that there was no great antislavery sentiment in the church at that time."[2]

In 1787 the issue again came before the Synod. This time the overtures committee reported a bill which had a strong statement against slavery, and urged members of the Presbyterian church to work for the abolition of it.[3] Discussion was delayed several days, and a substitute motion was adopted. This motion was more cautious than the original motion, although it affirmed the principle of the eventual abolition of slavery.[4] Its main difference is its statement

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[1]Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America 1706-1788. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841), p. 459. Hereafter referred to as Records.

[2]A. Murray, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

[3]Records, p. 539. The overture said in part that "It is more especially the duty of those who maintain the rights of humanity, and who acknowledge and teach the obligations of Christianity, to use such means as are in their power to extend the blessings of equal freedom to every part of the human race...the Synod of New York and Philadelphia recommend, in the warmest terms, to every member of their body,...to promote the abolition of slavery, and the instruction of negroes, whether bond or free."

[4]Records, p. 540. The action said in part that "The Synod...do highly approve of the general principles in favour of universal liberty, that prevail in America...yet, inasmuch as men introduced from the servile state to a participation of all the privileges of civil society, may be, in many respects, dangerous to the community, therefore, they earnestly recommend it to all the members belonging to their communion, to give those persons who are at present held in servitude, such good education as to prepare them for the better enjoyment of freedom...finally, they recommend it to all their people to use the most prudent measures, consistent with the interest and the state of civil society, in the counties where they live, to procure eventually the final abolition of slavery in America."

urging the education of slaves for freedom; there is also a difference in attitude, in that the initial overture boldly urged the abolition of slavery, while the adopted motion acknowledged that abolition could not be expected in the immediate future. Unfortunately the records do not give us insight as to the attitude of Southern representatives toward the two motions.[1]

Our discussion so far has concentrated mainly on the reaction to slavery among Southern Presbyterians before 1789. This partly is because it is improper to speak of a Southern Presbyterian reaction to sectionalism at this early date. However, several observations of a more general nature must be made about Southern Presbyterians and their relation to the political movements of this period.

The first observation is that Southern Presbyterians during this period seem to have felt few restraints about speaking, writing or acting on civil and political matters, and insisted that religion was the only sure foundation for a society. We have noticed the efforts of Samuel Davies during the French and Indian Wars in this connection,[2] but it is especially seen during the period of the American Revolution. The involvement of Presbyterians in the Revolution has been frequently noted[3] and need not detain us at this point;

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[1]A survey shows that there were fourteen commissioners to the Synod in 1787 from the South, out of a total of fifty-five. The committee on overtures included thirteen ministers, one from each of the represented presbyteries; of these, five were from the South (including Baltimore Presbytery). Records, p. 529.

[2]Supra, pp. 7-8.

[3]E. T. Thompson gives a recent survey of Southern Presbyterians and the Revolution in op. cit., pp. 88-96; he includes examples of Presbyterian clergymen active in the independence cause. See also the somewhat chauvinistic study by H. Gordon Harold, "Service in Founding and Preserving the Nation," in Gaius J. Slosser, ed. They Seek a Country: The American Presbyterians, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955). Older

the main conclusion is that Presbyterians were almost completely in support of the Revolution.[1]

The second observation is that Presbyterians often worked actively for a better society. This is not to say that social reform was the main thrust of the Southern Presbyterian clergy, but it must be noted that efforts in education,[2] religious freedom,[3] and political stability[4] all were seen as having a beneficial influence on society. This is important especially in comparing Southern Presbyterians in this period with those of a later period, in which all civil matters were held to be outside the province of the Church.

In summary, let us note several things about the Southern Presbyterian relationship to society before 1789.

First, in regard to slavery it can be seen that in the earliest period there was little questioning of the morality of slavery

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studies include Foote, N.C., pp. 251-280; Foote, Va. (1st), pp. 319-348; and Thomas Smyth, Presbyterianism, the Revolution, the Declaration, and the Constitution (reprinted in J. William Flinn, ed., The Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth, D. D. (Columbia, S. C.: The R. L. Bryan Co., 1908), Vol. 3, pp. 435-375. Hereafter referred to as Smyth, Works). See also C. H. Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy, and of the Religious and Sectarian Forces, on the American Revolution," American Historical Review, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Ocotober, 1913), pp. 44-64, especially p. 57.

[1]The major exception in the South were the Highland Scots, who had settled especially in the Cape Fear River area of North Carolina. For a discussion of their position, and the reasons for their support of the House of Hanover, see Duane Meyer, The Highland Scots of North Carolina, 1732-1776, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961, pp. 131-162. For the attitude of Presbyterian clergy among the Highland Scots, see E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 90-93.

[2]Convenient surveys of Presbyterian educational efforts can be found in E.T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 235-273, and William Warren Sweet, "The Founding of Educational Institutions" in Slosser (ed.), op. cit., pp. 127-149.

[3]E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 97-109.

[4]H. Gordon Harold, op. cit., passim.

itself, although specific evils of the system were attacked. From the time of Davies onward Southern Presbyterians made efforts for the conversion of slaves; these included such methods as the provision of books and the use of catechisms, with the assumption that slaves should be able to read. Southern Presbyterians also were quick to stress the beneficial effects of religious instruction of slaves, both from the standpoint of the master and society as a whole. Southern Presbyterians also were convinced that the conversion of slaves did not affect their civil status, and that the Church should seek to work within the slave system. Careful attention was also given to the mutual duties of masters and slaves. By the end of the period there were some voices which spoke against slavery, including Alexander Hewatt and Samuel Doak. On a national level Presbyterians were likewise affirming their support of the eventual abolition of slavery.

In social and political matters Presbyterian clergymen felt free to criticise social patterns and political structures. This is seen not only in their general support for the American Revolution, but in their efforts for education, religious freedom, and a political system based on law and justice.

It was in the next period that Southern Presbyterian positions on slavery and on the Church's relation to society were clarified. It is to this period that we now turn.

PART I. THE EARLY PERIOD

CHAPTER I. THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIETY AMONG SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS IN THE EARLY PERIOD

The Separation of Church and State

Religion as the Basis of Society

The National Stance of Southern Presbyterians

Summary

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIETY AMONG SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS IN THE EARLY PERIOD

Southern Presbyterians in the early period[1] found themselves in the midst of much social and political ferment. Foremost among the issues was the question of nationalism and sectionalism; the original thirteen colonies were now united under one government, and the adjustments which such an arrangement necessitated did not come easily to those who had been accustomed to think of themselves as independent entities. In the complex history of the American nation between the end of the Revolution and the beginning of the Civil War the issue of Southern sectionalism--a sectionalism brought about in part by the existence of slavery--would continue to plague the nation. Eventually it would lead to civil war.

It is our purpose in this chapter to examine the attitude of Southern Presbyterians to the emerging American nation. We shall begin by looking at the Southern Presbyterian understanding of the function of government (especially in its American context), and the relationship which the Church was to have with the State. Then we shall examine the actual stance of Southern Presbyterians in relation to sectionalism and American nationalism.

Discussions of the relationship between Church and State were conditioned by the dominance of one major question, namely, the

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1What we have designated "the early period" began with the formation of the General Assembly in 1789. It ended at different times in different sections of the South. See our summary, supra, pp. xi-xiii.

extent to which Church and State should be united along the lines that had prevailed in Europe for centuries and which had also been transplanted to the American colonies. Southern Presbyterians, in common with their brethren in the North, shared the conviction that Church and State must be separated. To John Holt Rice one of the major mistakes of the Reformers had been their failure to secure the disestablishment of the Church from the State; it was this error which the American churches had now corrected.[1] Presbyterians had joined forces with other dissenting groups, as well with such men as Thomas Jefferson, to seek the end of establishment in Virginia and the beginning of freedom of conscience; Hanover Presbytery had even sent a paid lobbyist to advocate its views before the Virginia General Assembly. Whatever their full motives might have been, the Presbyterians had great influence in determining the course of religious freedom in Virginia, and thus throughout the United States.[2]

For the purposes of our present discussion the controversy over church establishment had at least one important side effect. In the course of the controversy attention was essentially directed toward the question of what the Church's relation to the State should not be. The question of what the positive relationship should be, therefore, only gradually came to the fore. For this reason there is little direct discussion of the theological problem of the proper relationship

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[1]John Holt Rice to Rev. B. B. Wisner, November 22, 1828, in William Maxwell, A Memoir of the Rev. John H. Rice, D.D. (Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1835), p. 379.

[2]A survey of the actions of Presbyterians in Virginia will be found in E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 97-109. A fuller discussion, including the texts of the various petitions presented by Hanover Presbytery to the Virginia General Assembly, will be found in Foote, Va. (1st), pp. 307-348. For a stimulating interpretation of the process by which American churches accepted the voluntary principle see Franklin H. Littell, From State Church to Pluralism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American Life, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, 1962).

between the Church and State, or the broader question of the relationship between the Church and its total social context. Nevertheless, a clear picture of the attitude of Southern Presbyterians emerges upon careful examination.

Southern Presbyterians, along with other American Presbyterians, had affirmed their position on Church-State relations in a general way in their adoption of a revised Westminster Confession of Faith. The main revisions had concerned those sections which dealt with the civil magistrate, and had underlined the conviction that the civil magistrate was not to interfere with the Church, although the State was to protect the Church. The precise relationship between the two was not delineated, nor was the function of the State clearly presented, beyond the statement that God had ordained civil magistrates "for his own Glory and the public good...."[1]

A clearer articulation of the relative functions of Church and State was given by John Holt Rice, the leading Southern Presbyterian theologian of the period. To him the respective spheres of the Church and the State were equally ordained of God, and each therefore had its own powers and limitations. Further, unlike the various established church systems, the true relationship between the two spheres was one of complete separation.

> [Our conclusion is] That there is no relation whatever of any kind or of any degree between the Church and the State Governments. It is true that they have the Same Author for both are ordained of God and the same persons are subject to both, but the design of their institution and the means by which those designs are effected are so entirely distinct that it is not possible that

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[1]The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; Containing the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, the Government and Discipline and the Directory for the Worship of God, Ratified and adopted by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, held at Philadelphia May the 16th, 1788, and continued by adjournments until the 28th of the same month. (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1792), pp. 34-36.

> they should interfere with each other or in any way come in contact or collision without a manifest invasion on the part of the one of the rights and privileges of the other, or...the same doctrine more clearly the civil government has no power or authority either over the Church or in the Church its officials as such have no necessary connection with the Church and have no other relation to the Church than any or all other men. And conversely the Church has no authority in or over the State.[1]

Rice went on to show that his conclusion was based on a fundamental principle, namely, that

> "all Power in human governments, whether in Ch or State, is delegated and limited and therefore can not go beyond the bounds set by Him from whom all their authority is derived neither can they assume any powers which have not been delegated to them for this would be to invade the prerogative of the Sovereign of the Universe."[2]

For this reason, he contended, Christians might at times be called upon to disobey the State, if the State assumed for itself powers beyond those given to it by God.

Rice's essay is important not only for what it says, but for what it omits. To Rice (as well as his contemporaries) the major question was the interference of the State in ecclesiastical matters; for this reason there is little attention given to the possibility of Church interference in State matters. Rice admitted that there was a "difficulty of making in practice that distinction between Spiritual and temporal things which is so easily made in theory,"[3] but felt that the only conflict which would arise generally would be that involving decisions by ecclesiastical courts which were brought before civil

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[1]John Holt Rice. "Mutual Relations of Church and State, #1." MS essay, John Holt Rice Papers, Union Theological Seminary. There is no indication of date or of the occasion of the essay; it seems to have been delivered as an address, along with the second essay on the same subject noted in the following footnote.

[2]Ibid.

[3]John Holt Rice. "Mutual Relations of Church and State, #2," MS essay, John Holt Rice Papers, Union Theological Seminary.

courts for review.[1] The question, for example, of what responsibility the Church would have if the State was not carrying out its full responsibilities was not considered; neither was the question of the responsibility of the State to enforce moral behavior.

The affirmation of a sharp division between the Church and the State is seen clearly in the refusal of Southern Presbyterian periodicals to comment on political matters.[2] However, one important fact is clear from this period: Southern Presbyterians saw religion as the only certain basis for the American nation, and actively worked toward the goal of a Christian nation. The separation of Church and State might mean that the State no longer had the Church under its control so as to make good citizens of the population, but the goal was still there, even if the means had changed slightly. It is important also to see that implicitly Presbyterians had a firm conception of society as being built on law and order. John Holt Rice urged the support of benevolent enterprises such as the tract and Bible societies because they would have a beneficial effect on society.

> It is highly expedient that public institutions of a benevolent nature, and salutary tendency, should be multiplied in the country...when associations of this kind are multiplied, and the interest in them

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[1] Ibid.

[2] It should be remembered that there were comparatively few Southern Presbyterian periodicals published before the late 1820's. They did not hesitate to condemn some social practices that were deeply ingrained in Southern society, such as duelling, horse racing, intemperance, Sabbath breaking, and slavery. Also indicating the non-political nature of some Presbyterians is the following resolution of The Synod of North Carolina: "Resolved, that, in ordinary circumstances, Synod considers it a direliction [sic] of ministerial duty, & inconsistent with the obligations of a Presbyterian minister, to be a candidate for any Legislative appointment, especially in the Congressional department." Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Vol. 1 (1813), pp. 18-19. The incident which gave rise to this resolution is not indicated; it was passed unanimously.

> becomes general; the benevolent feelings of the whole community are raised to a tone which produces the happiest effects: new relations are formed; the bonds which unite society together are multiplied; the points of contact and adhesion in the great mass of the community become more numerous...public spirit is diffused throughout the whole Society; men, women and children learn that they ought not to live for themselves alone, but for their country and their fellow creatures in general.[1]

Similar sentiments were voiced by William Maxwell, a noted Virginia Presbyterian layman, in an address before the American Bible Society. Noting that the power of a democracy was vested in the people, Maxwell warned of the dangers which faced the nation if the people were not educated in religion and morality. "...what is to prevent our free democracy from following its natural bent, and launching us all, or those who came after us, into a wild and lawless anarchy?"[2] The only answer was thorough religious training, including the widespread distribution of the Bible.

The Synod of North Carolina took specific action to implement its conviction that Christianity must undergird society. At its meeting in October, 1820, the Synod urged the formation of "moral societies" in each of its congregations, and proposed a detailed constitution which could be adopted by each society.[3] The constitution took note of the goals of such a society:

> As members of a Christian community, it becomes us, not only to encourage, by counsel and exemplary life, the principles of vital godliness, in the hearts & lives of our fellowman, but to restrain and exclude, by all prudent and lawful means, the vices by which individuals are depraved, and society corrupted. From all proper exertions to effect this object, we may rationally trust, that, under the smiles of Divine Providence,

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[1]Christian Monitor, Vol. 1 (1816), pp. 319-320.

[2]"Extracts from the Speech of William Maxwell, Esq. of Norfolk, Va. before the American Bible Society, May 11, 1826." North Carolina Telegraph, June 30, 1826.

[3]The full text of the Synod's action is in Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Vol. 1 (1820), pp. 104-113.

> blessings will ensue...to society around us, of which we are constituent parts, and to our country, whose free institutions can find an assured continuence, only in the pure manners & lives of its citizens.[1]

The constitution then proposed fourteen specific goals, including the suppression of intemperance, swearing, Sabbath breaking, and other individual sins. One goal stated that "We will discountenance and repress, both in Voters and Candidates, all corrupt practices in elections."[2] Problems such as theft and cruelty to servants and animals were also included. The practical effect of the pastoral letter is difficult to judge, but the concerns underlying it are clear. The Church was to have an active part in moral reformation, which in turn would have a positive impact on society as a whole; the goal of a stable and law-abiding society is clearly in view.

Southern Presbyterians likewise believed that Presbyterian polity, essentially "republican" in nature, provided the best guarantee that Presbyterians would be useful citizens in the nation; by its very nature Presbyterian polity was opposed to any scheme of authoritarianism, whether in Church or State.[3] John Holt Rice even went so far as to claim that John Calvin was largely responsible for the movements toward civil and religious liberty which culminated in the formation of the American republic.[4]

It was partly this hope for the goal of a Christian nation

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[1] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

[2] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[3] This is developed, for example, in John Holt Rice, An Illustration of the Character & Conduct of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia. (Richmond: Du-Val & Burke, 1816), pp. 13-18. This pamphlet by Rice was addressed to the House of Delegates of Virginia in answer to the charge that Presbyterians were seeking the establishment of their denomination because of their petition for the incorporation of a theological seminary.

[4] Ibid.

which led Presbyterians into the field of education. On several notable occasions Presbyterians were influential in keeping skeptics from becoming professors at colleges; this was not denominational chauvinism as much as the conviction that infidelity led inevitable to an unstable society. John Holt Rice led the battle against the appointment of Dr. Thomas Cooper, a noted skeptic and friend of Thomas Jefferson, to the faculty of the University of Virginia; later Presbyterians in South Carolina would eventually wrest the presidency of the University of South Carolina from the same individual.[1] Philip Lindsley, president of the University of Nashville, pleaded for Archibald Alexander of Princeton Seminary to send him a pious mathematics teacher and urged seminaries to supply teachers to colleges in all disciplines.[2]

The attitude of Southern Presbyterians toward American government and society is seen more clearly through their actions.

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[1]For a survey of the controversy in Virginia see David E. Swift, "Thomas Jefferson, John Holt Rice and Education in Virginia, 1815-1825," Journal of Presbyterian History, Vol. 49:1 (Spring, 1971), pp. 32-58. See also the brief discussion in Clement Eaton, The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South (Revised edition of Freedom of Thought in the Old South), (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 304-305; Eaton terms those opposing Cooper's appointment "the forces of obscurantism," although Cooper's subsequent career at South Carolina College showed him as unwilling to admit diverse opinions in the College as his opponents. Eaton also recounts the struggle in South Carolina, pp. 305-308. On South Carolina see also M. LaBorde, History of the South Carolina College, From its Incorporation, Dec. 19, 1801, to Dec. 19, 1865, Including Sketches of its Presidents and Professors, (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, Printers, 1874), pp. 121-177.

[2]"It is singularly unfortunate for our colleges, that, generally, all the professorships of the abstract, experimental & physical sciences must be filled by laymen--& oftentimes too by very skeptical men. Ought not our Theological Seminaries to look after the matter? Why should they not furnish Professors of Mathematics, Chemistry, &c to our colleges as well as Presidents, Professors of Languages, Ethics, &c? Could they take a more direct or efficient course to extend the influence of religion, & to gain over to her cause the young and rising generation? If all our colleges were under the control & instruction of pious men only, what a glorious result might we not expect?" Philip Lindsley (Nashville) to A. Alexander (Princeton), July 7, 1827, MS letter, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Throughout the early period in the various areas of the South Presbyterians demonstrated a strong national spirit. This is not to say that they lost their sectional concern, but their outlook was broadly national to a remarkable extent.

The national outlook of Southern Presbyterians is seen first in specific statements which speak of the need for national unity. The Christian Monitor devoted two issues mainly to a reprint of an address by Lyman Beecher calling upon the Church to work toward national unity.

> The integrity of the Union demands special exertions to produce in the nation a more homogeneous character, and bind us together by firmer bonds. Commencing as each State did, a kind of insulated existence, and preserving still as it ought to do, an independent internal organization; and spread as the States are, over a vast extent of country; and united as they are, chiefly for defence and commercial purposes, there is not sufficient intercourse to beget affection; nor a sufficient solidity of the whole nation to counteract the danger of local repulsions in times of public commotion. A remedy must be applied to this vital defect of our national organization....The consolidation of the State Governments would make a despotism. But the prevalence of pious, intelligent, enterprising ministers thro' the whole nation, at the ratio of one for a thousand, would establish schools, and academies, and colleges, and habits, and institutions of homogeneous influence.---These would produce a sameness of views, and feelings, and interests, which would lay the foundation of our empire upon a rock....The intercourse of good men, in the blessed enterprise of evangelizing our land, will do more than every thing beside to make the different parts of the land acquainted, to do away local jealousies, to consolidate the nation, and perpetuate its liberties.[1]

Southern Presbyterians also gave frequent expression to their commitment to the American nation. In discussing the purpose of his new Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine in 1818, John Holt Rice stated,

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[1]"Address of the Charitable Society of Connecticut for the Education of Indigent Pious Young Men, for the Ministry of the Gospel." The Christian Monitor, Vol. 1 (Sept. 9, 1815), pp. 74-75.

> Our birth, our education, our habits of thinking and feeling, all conspire to render the country in which we live dear to us. We have compared the institutions of various nations; and have considered the effect which political and ecclesiastical establishments have had on the individual and social happiness of men; and we rejoice in the Providence which has cast our lot in this land of equal rights and under this government of laws. For God and Country, is the motto which would most adequately express our views and feelings. Our first duty is to him who created and redeemed us; our next to our Country. We rejoice that these are not inconsistent.[1]

Southern Presbyterians especially gave vent to their national feelings on Independence Day, July 4. John Holt Rice exclaimed that "the dawn of this day always brings such a train of recollections, and awakens such deep emotions, that as soon as its faint light peeps through my casement, I am thoroughly roused."[2] Archibald Alexander, in a July 4th sermon, attributed the success of the American Revolution to the providence of God, and said, "I am sure I do not know a nation under heaven, whose civil and religious privileges are so great, where every class of citizens have such advantages, and where the rights of men are so well secured."[3] Francis McFarland likewise spoke to his Virginia congregation on the blessings of American liberty, using the occasion not only to remind them of the liberty they enjoyed as citizens but the liberty from sin available in the Gospel.[4]

The national stance of Southern Presbyterians is also seen

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[1] Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 1 (January, 1818), p. 7.

[2] Quoted by Maxwell, op. cit., p. 222.

[3] Quoted by James W. Alexander, Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), p. 203. The date is not given, but it was delivered before Alexander went north, in 1807. Internal evidence suggests a date around 1795. It is of interest that Alexander went on to make an apparent reference to slavery: "To this there is but one exception, which distorts the political features of our country, but with which it is not my business to meddle."

[4] Francis McFarland, "John 8:30-36," MS sermon, July 4, 1824, Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

in their reaction to major crises during the period. The Synod of Virginia found itself embroiled in controversy during the first crisis, the so-called Whiskey Rebellion, in which citizens in the frontier areas of Pennsylvania and Ohio revolted against the authority of the central government to levy an excise tax on whiskey. At the time of the controversy (ca. 1791-1794) part of western Pennsylvania and Ohio was under the jurisdiction of the Synod of Virginia, and Foote says that many of the men active in the insurrection were Presbyterians.[1]

In September, 1794, the Synod of Virginia held its annual meeting in Harrisonburg, in the Valley of Virginia. About a month before the Federal Government had requisitioned troops to put down the insurrection, and a contingent of Virginia troops headed for Pennsylvania was in Harrisonburg during the Synod meeting. Moses Hoge, one of the most distinguished men in the Synod, backed a resolution calling for the Synod to "prepare an address to the people under their care, & inculcate upon them the duty of obedience to the Laws of their Country."[2] Although not specified, the reference to the dissent in the West was obvious. Hoge's son, John Blair Hoge, says that "When the resolution was brought before the house, a painful pause, ensued, which was at length broken by the commencement of an animated debate."[3] The resolution finally came to a vote, and was lost by a slim margin. The main opponent was William Graham, the president of Liberty Hall in Lexington, Virginia, the forerunner of Washington and Lee University. Graham was "a violent antifederalist, & opposed to the Administration of Washington,

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[1]Foote, Va. (1st), p. 560. Ronald L. Young has shown, however, that support for the rebellion among Presbyterians was limited to laymen; many clergymen in the area opposed the insurrection. "The Presbyterians and the Whiskey Rebellion," Journal of Presbyterian History, Vol. 43 (1965), pp. 28-36.

[2]Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 1 (1794), p. 125.

[3]John Blair Hoge, Sketch of the Life and Character of the Rev. Moses Hoge, D.D., (Richmond: Union Theological Seminary, 1964), p. 84.

& dipt deep in the politics of the day."[1] Hoge, on the other hand, was an avowed Federalist.[2]

As soon as news of the Synod vote became known the community became extremely agitated; the troops especially took offense at the decision, and it was soon clear that violence against the members of the Synod was imminent. Hoge and some others managed to calm the excited feelings, and the crisis passed; Hoge later was invited to preach to the troops before their departure for the West.[3]

At first the Synod action would seem to disporve our contention that Southern Presbyterians generally took a national stance. However, two things must be noted. First, the motives which led to the defeat of the resolution cannot immediately be branded as anti-Federal in character. The precise nature of the motives involved are unfortunately beyond full recovery. Out of fourteen ministers present at the meeting when the resolution was introduced, one was from Redstone Presbytery (western Pennsylvania) and two were from Ohio Presbytery; it is probably safe in assuming that they would have opposed the motion. The only hint as to the motives of the other men (nine from Lexington Presbytery and two from Hanover Presbytery), is given by

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[1] Ibid., p. 85. Graham himself was apparently a forceful personality who had the ability to make enemies easily, as well as to sway people to his positions. See Foote, Va. (1st), pp. 475-476, for a discussion of his personality. Duke University Library has a collection of letters by him concerning a legal suit in which he was engaged, and which give a similar impression of his personality.

[2] For a brief statement of his political views see Moses Hoge to Col. John Morrow, October 25, 1807, MS letter, Hoge Papers, Montreat.

[3] "I preached to the soldiers on the western expedition. It was a disagreeable exercise....I was sensibly afflicted with the reflection that an unjustifiable & Most unnatural insurrection should render a recourse to arms necessary in support of the government." Moses Hoge Journal, (September 29, 1794), quoted by John Blair Hoge, op. cit., p. 86. Both John Blair Hoge (pp. 83-86) and Foote (Va. 1st), pp. 476, 560) recount the agitation caused by the Synod; the Synod minutes only hint at the difficulties.

John Blair Hoge.

> It will not be contended that smong the clerical or lay members of that judicatory, there were none who felt dissatisfied with the general course affairs had taken under the existing administration, & particularly with the measure of employing an armed force for the execution of an obnoxious law....It is affirmed on good authority that every member of the Synod, when fairly understood, regarded with decided approbation the conduct of the insurgents. But a majority of the Synod judged it inexpedient to inculcate a duty which was not likely to be voluntarily observed, and thought it best to abstain from all participation in a matter which now was, & of right ought to be, under the management of the civil authority.[1]

Hoge continues to say that William Graham later admitted to Moses Hoge that his judgment had been wrong on the occasion, and even changed his political convictions to some extent.[2]

The motives, therefore, were various. Several men opposed the resolution because they were from the West; at least one, Graham, was a decided anti-Federalist. The main motive, however, seems to have been the conviction that nothing was to be gained by the resolution, and especially, that the Church had no business interferring with a secular concern. Although there is no way of knowing, it is likely also that the Synod feared the resolution would embarrass the members of the two western presbyteries; the Presbyterian Church in those areas was precarious enough without such problems. In short, the vote on the resolution cannot be interpreted as a vote against Federalism.

A second feature is of greater importance in seeing the view of the Synod, although it is curiously omitted in the accounts of John Blair Hoge and William Henry Foote. Although the resolution was

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[1]John Blair Hoge, op. cit., p. 85. Moses Hoge died in 1820; John Blair Hoge's manuscript life of his father was prepared sometime between then and his death in 1826. (The original MS was intended for publication but a sufficient number of subscribers was not raised. The original MS is in the library of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond.) He thus probably had access to some who had taken part in the 1794 Synod meeting.

[2]Ibid.

narrowly defeated, the Synod then voted unanimously to declare a day of fasting for their churches, and issued a pastoral letter to the churches giving the reasons for the fast. The letter declared that the sins of the nation were the reason for the current strife, especially the profanation of the Sabbath. It continued by saying that the Synod:

> agreeably to the express command of God, exhort the people to be subject to the powers that be; & to manifest the zeal of good citizens by using their influence to suppress all disorders which may have arisen to undermine the foundation of our happy Government & disturb the peace of Civil Society. Who knows that the Lord will be entreated on our behalf & in behalf of our bleeding Country, turn from us his just displeasure, remove his chastising hand--avert the calamities of civil war, & bless our confederate States with peace.[1]

It is tempting to treat the pastoral letter as a compromise measure; both Hoge and Graham were on the committee which drafted it. While this may have been the case, it is also clear that it can hardly be interpreted as an anti-Federalist document. It is at the same time a more diplomatic statement than the original brief resolution, and a careful reading shows that the Synod may have thought it wise to placate those in the community who had become agitated at the negative vote on the original resolution. The pastoral letter, therefore, shows some attempt to avoid meddling in a political matter, but also shows a concern for social order and a definite bias toward the Federal Government.[2]

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 1, (1794), p. 140.

[2] The letter was ordered printed in the local newspaper. In the last hours of the Synod on Saturday, September 27, a Colonel Harrison of the militia interrupted the Synod meeting and demanded a copy of the proceedings of the Synod in regard to the original resolution, together with a statement of the motives of those who voted against it. The Synod agreed, but after adjournment, the moderator, on the advice of some of the members, immediately called a pro re nata meeting which met on Monday. A committee was appointed with authority to meet with Colonel Harrison and to do "any thing necessary to vindicate the Character of Synod." (Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 1 (1794), p. 145.) The committee met with him and apparently persuaded him of the loyalty of the Synod; "Indeed, with the view of correcting misrepresentations already afloat, he cheerfully prepared & signed a

The national stance of Southern Presbyterians as a whole is better illustrated by their reaction to a second crisis, the War of 1812 with Great Britain. In common with their brethren in the North, Southern Presbyterians felt a deep concern in the affairs of the nation as the threat of war grew stronger, and interpreted the impending war as a sign of God's displeasure with the nation. A few months before the beginning of fighting Moses Hoge warned of the dangers facing the nation from God's judgment:

> A merciful God may possibly deliver us from the impending calamity; but not for our righteousness. For as a nation, we are a guilty disobedient people. We deserve to be involved in the wide wasting calamities of revolting Europe.[1]

In similar manner Andrew Flinn, pastor of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Charleston and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1812, told of the observance in his church of a fast day appointed by the Assembly:

> The present is a cloudy and dark day to our country--a cloud, dark & deep, seems to hang over our land. Whether it will be permitted to burst upon us, is known

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Certificate stating his conviction that the Synod had not departed on this occasion from their duty, nor in any degree extended their countenance to measures hostile to the peace of the community." (John Blair Hoge, op. cit., p. 86). At the next Synod meeting (September, 1795) the committee reported that it had completed its work and "nothing further was necessary in the affair." Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, Vol. 1 (1795), p. 150. It was also reported that churches generally had complied with the call for a fast day.

A concern for order is also expressed in a sermon by Archibald Alexander preached about this time. "It was only last year, that we were threatened with a calamity at home. We had before us the disagreeable prospect of a civil war. Our internal peace seemed to be broken. Our troops were under the necessity of marching out, not against a foreign or a savage foe, but against our own brethren. But Providence interposed, the insurrection is suppressed, and every thing has returned to peace and order. The gloomy cloud which hung over our country is dispelled, and we have had the happiness of seeing how promptly all classes of citizens stepped forth to restore order and support the law." Quoted by J. W. Alexander, op. cit., p. 203.

[1]Moses Hoge, "The Controversy with Christendom," Sermons Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Moses Hoge, D. D., (Richmond: N. Pollard, 1821), p. 386.

> only to Him whom we have offended. I have just returned from the house of God, where hundreds assembled, professedly, to humble themselves before him, whose hand is lifted over our nation.[1]

The war itself was not undertaken with unanimity in the United States. In general, many in New England opposed the war, while the West favored it, partially for its anticipated effects on the Indian problem. The South also tended to favor the war, thus linking itself with the West.[2]

Southern Presbyterian reaction to the war in general seems to have taken two different directions. The first was a tendency to oppose the war; this characterized Southern Presbyterian opinion before the beginning of the war. The second direction was a tendency to support the war strongly once the fighting had begun.

The shift is clearly seen in the attitude of Dr. David Caldwell, a pastor in North Carolina who also ran a noted classical school and had been active in the formation of the North Carolina State Constitution. At first he was opposed to the war, in large measure because of the suffering he felt it would entail. As time went on, however, he supported the war, largely from patriotic reasons. On one occasion the call for militia in North Carolina met with stiff resistance, since many could see little sense in supplying men to fight in another state. Caldwell, however, preached to a large crowd at the county court house, using as his text the words, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." Because of the sermon the required

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[1]Andrew Flinn to Ashbel Green, July 30, 1812, MS letter. Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[2]For a survey of the varied Presbyterian reactions to the War in various parts of the Country see William Gribbin, "The War of 1812 and American Presbyterianism," Journal of Presbyterian History, Vol. 47 (1969), pp. 320-390. His treatment of Southern attitudes is brief, but indicates that Southern Presbyterians generally supported the War once hostilities commenced.

number of young men enlisted in the militia immediately.[1]

Southern Presbyterian support of the war is seen clearly in several resolutions passed by various judicatories. Several months after Perry's victory on Lake Erie the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia was overtured.

> that Synod forward an Address to the General Government ...requesting the appointment of a day of general thanksgiving for the kind interposition of Divine Providence in favor of our arms on the Lakes, to the confusion of our barbarous & savage foes.[2]

The address was subsequently prepared and sent to the President. In it the Synod noted with approval the appointment of a day of humiliation by the President in September.

> In the distinguished interposition of Divine Providence in our favor as a nation, & in the success with which it has pleased God to crown the exertions of our armies both by land & water since that period, we cannot but recognize an Almighty hand and a most comfortable evidence that the many fervent prayers which were presented to Heaven for our dear and common Country, have been remarkably answered. ...The Synod...with sentiments of profound respect for your person and attachment to your Administration, take this opportunity when convened, to suggest that it would be highly gratifying to them and the Churches in their connexion, if a day were appointed by the General Government for the purpose of expressing the gratitude of the Nation to the Almighty Disposer of events for his recent manifestations of goodness to us as a People. This liberty we have taken from a conviction not only that it is an incumbent duty, but also that such a step would be happily conducive towards healing divisions in political opinion & cementing more strongly the attachment of all to those measures which have been adopted for the common good and which, as a body, we approve.[3]

A firmer statement of support for the President could hardly be imagined from an ecclesiastical body; it also must be seen against the backdrop of widespread discontent with the war, particularly in New England.

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[1]The incident is recounted by Foote, NC, pp. 241-242 and by the Governor of North Carolina, J. M. Morehead (a former pupil of Caldwell's), in Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 267.

[2]Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, (Nov., 1813), pp. 3-4.

[3]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Much less political in nature was a pastoral letter addressed to the churches by the Synod of Virginia in October, 1814. The end of war in Europe had been met with feelings of apprehension in the United States, since it was feared that Great Britain could now devote full attention to the North American theater. Less than two months before the Synod meeting the British had captured and burned Washington. The Synod's pastoral letter urged the keeping of a fast day, for "if ever there was a time when such a measure was proper, the present, accompanied as it is by signs of awful import, & pregnant with danger, is such a time."[1] Disclaiming any intention on the part of the Synod to interfere in political affairs,[2] the letter essentially dealt with the sins of the nation which the Synod felt had brought about the judgment of God. The only course of action was for the Church to repent and turn to God, and then do all possible to make the nation a God-fearing nation. At the same time the Synod exhorted all to be steadfast "in the discharge of all the duties of Christians & of citizens."[3]

The pastoral letter, while essentially religious in character, nevertheless clearly assumes that the entire nation is in danger, and that what affects one part affects the whole. A national stance is assumed by the writers of the letter.[4]

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 4, (1814), p. 53. The entire text of the letter covers pp. 52-65.

[2] "But here we wish it to be distinctly understood that it is far from our intention to engage in political discussion. Happily for us, while the State is bound to protect all Christians in the exercises of religious worship, she is not particularly connected with any church: of course, as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are exempt from the care & labour of managing state interests. Nor are our own proper labours so light, or our cases so trivial, as to induce the gratuitous assumption of those which belong to others." Ibid., pp. 53-54.

[3] Ibid., p. 64.

[4] The entire pastoral letter is also a good example of the Presbyterian concern with social and moral reform, in that it strongly urges religious measures to be used to change individuals and thus change society.

In various minor ways Southern Presbyterians indicated

The Synod of North Carolina at its October, 1814, meeting also issued an appeal for a fast day, noting that a fast day called by the General Assembly had not been kept because many had not known about it in the Synod. No pastoral letter was issued in connection with the fast day, however. Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Vol. 1 (1814), pp. 18-19.

Concern for the political state of the nation is also indicated in occasional comments in letters and journals. Moses Hoge noted in his Journal, "Today I preached in the morning at Cumberland with considerable satisfaction from _____. I was led to this subject by the afflictive intelligence of the ravages committed by the British at Washington. In the afternoon I was led by this event to preach at the College Hall from Psalm 112:7. In the morning I was more than usually afflicted for the state of our country....But some how, I scarcely know in what way I was led to entertain a confident expectation that God would be pleased in some way to deliver us & that at no very remote period from the present calamitous contest." Moses Hoge, Journal, quoted by John Blair Hoge, op. cit., p. 156. This is probably the sermon mentioned by Foote, Va. (1st), pp. 564-565, who says that Hoge preached also to a troop of calvary the next day on their way to the fighting. In a letter to his son Samuel he exclaimed, "When shall our once happy Country be again delivered from the scourge of war!" (MS letter, December 25, 1813, Hoge Papers, Montreat). He likewise noted the effect of the war on his ministry: "The present war has, indeed, thrown some obstructions in our way, but we must not despond." (Moses Hoge to Samuel Hoge, March 24, 1814, MS letter, Hoge Papers, Montreat). In similar fashion John Holt Rice found the war had had a negative effect on the religious life of Norfolk during a visit there, but found the people eager to hear him preach. (P. B. Price, op. cit., p. 70).

More politically oriented was Isaac Anderson, the notable founder of Maryville College in East Tennessee, who became a chaplain to a militia unit. In a sermon he noted that the sins of America had caused the war, but went on to discuss the political causes of the war. "As regards the political cause of this war, we are on the Lord's side. We should arm ourselves in the fear of God for battle, for we have not sinned against Britain but Britain against us....The call of country is the call of God." Quoted by Samuel Tyndale Wilson, A Century of Maryville College, 1819-1919, (Maryville: The Directors of Maryville College, 1919), p. 29.

In politics one Presbyterian in particular should be noted during this period. Felix Grundy was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Nashville, Tennessee, and a distinguished criminal lawyer. Elected to the House of Representatives in 1811, Grundy soon became a leader of the forces espousing nationalism and war with England; the group, labeled the "war hawks," included Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun. The extent of the influence of Presbyterianism on Grundy is unknown; he was not an officer in the First Presbyterian Church, but his wife was extremely active and was also responsible for establishing the first Sunday schools in Nashville. See William E. Beard, "History of the First Presbyterian Church," The First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee: The Addresses Delivered in Connection with the Observance of the One Hundredth Anniversary, November 8-15, 1914. (Nashville: Foster & Parkes, 1915), pp. 66, 211-212. On Grundy see the sketch in Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), Vol. 8, pp. 32-33. (Hereafter referred to as DAB).

in the early period that their interests extended beyond their immediate areas. John Holt Rice on one occasion visited a church in Albany, New York, which he was told had been built by funds from Southern Presbyterians. The Southern churches strongly supported the Assembly's seminary at Princeton, and, in spite of the great economic distress caused by the panic of 1819, the Synod of North Carolina and the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia united to endow a professorship at Princeton Seminary, deliberately rejecting aid at the same time to the seminary established at Maryville in 1819 by the Synod of Tennessee.[1] John Holt Rice, while dedicated to the foundation of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, disclaimed any desire to draw students from the Northern schools, particularly Princeton.[2]

The establishment of theological schools in the South in the early period should not be interpreted as a sign of sectionalism but as a response to the realities of meeting the needs of the Southern churches.[3] As early as 1817 Hopewell Presbytery in Georgia had discussed

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[1]Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Vol. 1 (1820), p. 94; Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, (1820), pp. 64-66; Howe, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 412-413. Howe says that Presbyterians in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia contributed between $42,000 and $43,000 to Princeton before the establishment of Columbia Theological Seminary, which was authorized by the Synod in 1824.

[2]"Although we have been endeavouring, and still are in a feeble way endeavouring to build up a Theological Seminary for the South; we are not indifferent to the success of Princeton. On the contrary, in any collision of interest between that and another, we shall cleave to Princeton with all our hearts, and afford support to the extent of our abilities." John Holt Rice to Archibald Alexander, February 4, 1819, quoted by Maxwell, op. cit., p. 159.

[3]"Still lacking an adequate system of internal transportation, the country could not be served by a single educational center in New Jersey [Princeton]...it was becoming clear that the theory of 'one great seminary' could not be realized and that a federal affiliation with the Assembly was better suited to a church so widely distributed." Elwyn A. Smith, The Presbyterian Ministry in American Culture: A Study in Changing Concepts, 1700-1900. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 166, 167.

the possibility of establishing some type of theological seminary in its bounds, but had rejected the proposal after several years of sporadic discussion.[1] Moses Hoge had been elected in 1807 as the Synod of Virginia's theology professor at Hampden-Sidney College, but the formation of a separate seminary (Union) awaited the efforts of John Holt Rice in the early 1820's. The reasons for establishing Hoge's professorship seem to have been practical in nature; it should be recalled that the seminary at Princeton had not been established when he undertook his work.[2] On the other hand, the later work of John Holt Rice in organizing the seminary as a separate entity had some overtones of sectionalism, although emphasis is not on sectional pride but on the practical consideration that Northern men would not come South in any numbers and Southern men educated in the North tended to remain there.[3] The establishment of the Southern and Western Theological Seminary, authorized by the Synod of Tennessee in 1819 to be located in Maryville, likewise was spurred mainly by practical considerations. Isaac Anderson, the principle individual behind the establishment of the school, had

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[1]For a summary of the attempt by the Presbytery see Howe, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 412.

[2]Princeton Seminary was established in 1812. Hoge was president of Hampden-Sydney College and was responsible for teaching theology students in addition to his duties as president. The Synod actually established a theological library at Hampden-Sydney at first, and only later (1812) was Hoge formally appointed theology professor.

[3]"Men educated among ourselves are better suited to the habits of thinking and feeling which prevail here, and in the Southern country generally! and of course can minister to greater acceptance among the people." Quoted by Maxwell, op. cit., p. 149. Rice contended that Northern men would only come to Virginia in the winter but fled in the Summer. (John Holt Rice to William Maxwell, May 27, 1823, in Maxwell, pp. 240-241.) He likewise found that Virginians educated in the North "upon their return appeared to have conceived an incurable disgust against all that was Virginian; and nothing could be heard from them but censures of the laws, the politics, the manners and customs, of Virginia." John Holt Rice to Theodoric Randolph, May 19, 1813, in Maxwell, p. 94. Rice also complained that most Southern students would not go North anyway (Maxwell, p. 232).

been a commissioner to General Assembly in 1819. While there he had pleaded with many men to come to the Tennessee area, which was still a frontier; he likewise spent time at Princeton urging students to consider coming to Tennessee. His efforts, however, were to no avail, and he returned convinced that the only course open to Presbyterians in Tennessee was the establishment of a seminary.[1] The seminary drew strong financial support from the North in its early years.[2]

What has just been said about the national stance of Southern Presbyterians should not be taken as indicating that they lost all interest in their own sections. For the most part they remained loyal to their own areas as well. The balance between local and national feelings is seen in John Holt Rice. In commenting on the name of his Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Rice noted:

> "Disclaiming as we do, all local prejudices, and acknowledging the United States as our country, we confess that we take a peculiarly lively interest in the prosperity and welfare of that section in which we were born and educated; and therefore we have prefixed the name Virginia to the general terms which characterize the nature of the work.[3]

In reviewing the Southern Presbyterian understanding and practice of the Church's relationship to society in the early period four points in particular are worthy of special note. First, Southern Presbyterians stressed a sharp division between Church and State, believing that both were divinely ordained for specific functions, and that the spheres in which each was to function were essentially inde-

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[1]Samuel Tyndale Wilson, op. cit., pp. 31-46; Ralph Waldo Lloyd, Maryville College: A History of 150 Years, 1819-1969. (Maryville: Maryville College Press, 1969), pp. 3-7.

[2]This is indicated in the numerous contributions from the North listed in the Calvinistic Magazine (1st Series), November, 1829, pp. 653ff; October, 1831, pp. 310-311.

[3]Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 1, (1818), p. 1.

pendent. Not only did this mean that the State was not to interfere in the sphere of the Church, but the Church was not to interfere in the sphere of the State.

Second, Southern Presbyterians were committed to the goal of a stable society. This was a logical extension of their conviction that government was ordained of God, and had the God-given responsibility of suppressing evil and working for the common good. For this reason, social disorder was not only harmful, but was a clear denial of God's will for society.

Third, they were likewise committed to the proposition that religion was the necessary foundation of a stable society. Society was made up of individuals, and unless those individuals were positively affected by the Gospel, society itself was in danger of chaos. Implicit in this was the conviction that laws alone would not insure a stable society; people must be made to realize that obedience to the laws was a God-given responsibility.

Finally, Southern Presbyterians generally took a national, rather than sectional, stance in the early period. While not denying their regional heritage, they saw themselves as part of a great new nation which had come about through the benevolence of Divine Providence. If God had in fact brought the nation into existence, then a purely sectional stance would be a denial of God's work. In the great issues which faced the new nation, Southern Presbyterians looked beyond the effect of these issues on their own regions and acted in terms of national interest.

The relationship between these four points is important. If government was ordained by God, then it was logical that Christians should be committed to a stable society, since that was the kind of society God would ordain. If a stable society is God's will, then it

is logical that Christians should seek to implement that kind of society by inculcating religious and moral principles. It was also logical for Christians, favoring a stable society, to assume a national stance rather than a regional stance, since the former would be more conducive to social peace than the latter. On the other hand, the last three points inevitably led to some modification of the first point. If society was not as stable as God would have it, did this not imply some responsibility on the part of the Church to work toward change? However, did this not mean that the Church was in danger of moving beyond its God-ordained sphere? In actual practice, therefore, the four points could not be carried out with complete logic and harmony.

As Southern Presbyterians sought to work out the relationship between these points one problem in particular came to dominate their attention. It was this issue which would force Southern Presbyterians to examine in more detail the exact nature of the Church's relationship to Southern society, and which would eventually bring about significant alteration in their understanding of these four points. The problem was slavery, and it is to this problem that we must now turn.

PART I. THE EARLY PERIOD

CHAPTER II. SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS AND SLAVERY IN THE EARLY PERIOD

Introduction

The Church and Slavery: South Carolina

The Church and Slavery: Virginia

Individual Presbyterians and Slavery: Virginia and North Carolina

Individual Presbyterians and Slavery: South Carolina and Georgia

Individual Presbyterians and Slavery: the Old Southwest

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Summary

CHAPTER TWO

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS AND SLAVERY IN THE EARLY PERIOD

The years following the American Revolution were not only years of great growth for the nation, but for the Presbyterian Church as well. The Southern section of the Church shared in this growth; by 1830 it could count 6 synods and 24 presbyteries, with 323 ministers, 542 churches, and 32,740 communicants.[1] We have noted that, with few exceptions, Southern Presbyterians before 1789 generally made little criticism of slavery. In the decades following 1789, however, there was a rising sentiment among Southern Presbyterians against slavery. Andrew Murray has contended that from the beginning of their history in the South, "Presbyterians had accepted slavery as part of the social order."[2] Such a statement is misleading, for during the period we are examining there were many who viewed slavery as a deplorable evil, and deeply desired emancipation. It was only later that a unanimous opinion developed under a variety of pressures, and, as we shall see, this unanimity developed in different areas of the Church at slightly different times.

THE VIEWS OF SLAVERY IN THE EARLY PERIOD

The ideals of liberty and individual freedom which found expression in the American Revolution undoubtedly had an effect on the development of anti-slavery thought among Southern Presbyterians in

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[1] GA Minutes, 1830, pp. 308-311. Not all churches reported statistics during most of this period, so these figures are probably understated. Southern Presbyteries also had 65 licentiates in 1830.

[2] A. Murray, op. cit., p. 18.

the decades following the War, although the precise relationship is impossible to trace. In addition the general decline in the economic feasibility of slavery led many to question the value of slavery, quite apart from any question of the morality of the institution. Whatever the reasons, the period under consideration saw the birth of much anti-slavery expression among Southern Presbyterians.[1]

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[1] Much of the inaccuracy of various writers on the subject of slavery (especially in this earliest period) has come about through a failure to note distinctions which must be made if a comprehensive view of actual attitudes toward slavery is to be obtained. Vander Velde has noted four essential attitudes which were possible on the question of slavery. First, some held a strong pro-slavery position, in which slavery was seen as being part of the established social order, and was even defended from Scripture. This first position was held by some during the earliest period, usually laymen; it did not find full and coherent expression until later, but would eventually come to characterize virtually the entire Southern Presbyterian Church in the 1840's and 1850's. The second position is what might be called "anti-slave-system." In this view, slavery itself was not essentially sinful or morally wrong, but in its actual manifestation it often was accompanied by certain evils which were sinful (such as physical abuse of slaves, denial of slave marriages, failure to give religious instruction, etc.). This came to be the position of many in the Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church, and is mainly useful to describe sentiment in the 1840's and 1850's. A third position can be termed "anti-slavery." This position held that slavery itself was a sinful relationship, regardless of such factors as the treatment of slaves. However, the anti-slavery position also held that in some circumstances emancipation might not be in the best interests of both the slave and society; slaveholding, therefore, might be the lesser of two evils in certain circumstances. This was essentially the position of the Presbyterian Church nationally until the 1830's. This position did not, incidently, exclude concern over the evils of the slave system. Persons of this persuasion tended to favor some scheme of gradual emancipation, and likewise often backed plans for colonizing blacks in Western Africa or Haiti. The final position was what is usually termed "abolitionist;" it contended that slavery in all circumstances was sinful, and advocated a policy of immediate and universal emancipation. At no time did abolitionists have any degree of strength in the Presbyterian Church, North or South, except for the second half of the 1850's in the New School. Lewis G. Vander Velde, The Presbyterian Churches and the Federal Union, 1861-1869. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), pp. 134-135.

In terms of our present discussion, Southern Presbyterians in the early period held all four views, although the pro-slavery position was not articulated to any degree, and the abolitionist position is notable only in a few significant cases. The second position--anti-slave-system--likewise was not clearly stated, although fairly commonly held. The third position was that most frequently held among Southern Presbyterians in this period, at least among those who gave serious thought to the question of slavery. The period of transition (Part Two of the present

This is seen essentially in two ways. First, Southern church courts for the first time began to debate the matter of slavery, and their testimony was universally against slavery.

The first occasion in which slavery came to attention of a Southern Church court apparently was in a sermon preached before the Presbytery of South Carolina by the Reverend William C. Davis in 1794, he was answered by another member of the Presbytery, Dr. Thomas Reese. Concerning Reese and this incident Howe says:

> As proof of the deference paid to his talents by his brethren in religious assemblies, he was selected by some leading men of the presbytery of South Carolina, on a certain occasion, to repel the charges brought by the Rev. W. C. Davis, in a discourse preached before that body, in which he, Davis, denounced all his fellow-christians who owned slaves. This reply of Dr. Reese met the entire approbation of the presbytery, and greatly mortified Davis, this early advocate of abolition, in 1794. It is an able argument on the subject of slavery, and shows how early this vexed question had been introduced in the Southern church. It is still extant....[1]

The incident, curiously enough, is not recorded in the manuscript minutes of the Presbytery of South Carolina, nor is Reese's reply now extant.

The above quotation would lead one to believe that Davis was alone in his denunciation of slavery, but such was not the case. Two years later the Presbytery of South Carolina dealt with another of its members, James Gilliland. Gilliland was to be ordained as pastor of the Bradaway Church in South Carolina, but when the Presbytery met at the church to proceed with his ordination it was found that some in

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work) saw the rapid decline of anti-slavery sentiment and its replacement by those holding a pro-slavery position. The latter did not mean, however, that evils of the system were not criticised.

[1]G. Howe, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 638. Reese died in 1796. Howe's information was from a memoir of Reese written by Rev. J. R. Witherspoon, of Greensboro, Alabama, in 1851. This late date probably accounts for the anti-abolition bias of the writer.

the congregation were unwilling to receive him.

> Accordingly a remonstrance against Mr. Gillilands [sic] ordination was laid before the Presbytery signed by 11 or 12 persons--Mr. Gilliland was called in & interrogated on the subject of the remonstrance. He denied that he had preached any thing against the Government--Asserted that on the subject of slavery he had preached as openly before he was called by the church, as he ever did since--said that he thought it a part of the counsel of God--that he should preach against it, and that he intended so to do, provided he was ordained; but said if he was wrong he wished to be open to conviction.[1]

The next day the issue was resolved--although only temporarily, as it turned out--and Gilliland was ordained.

> Mr. Gilliland was called in, conferred with, & conceded that he thought the voice of God thro' the counsel of the Presbytery advised him to desist from preaching on the subject of slavery--that therefore he would be silent on that subject, and that he would not do it without previously consulting the Presbytery, and that he would with conscientious integrity as far as in his power regard their counsel....[2]

Gilliland, however, still had questions about the problem of slavery and whether or not he should keep quiet on the subject. He obeyed the injunction of the Presbytery, but raised the issue at the next stated meeting in October, 1796.

> The Revd Mr Gilliland at the time of his ordination, having consented to desist from publicly preaching against Negro-slavery until he should have further advice from Presbytery, laid his conscientious scruples before them as still existing, and requested advice whether he should continue to conceal or to declare his sentiments from the Pulpit--The Presbytery advise him to desist until he lay his case before Synod for their advice.[3]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of South Carolina, 1785-1799, MS, p. 90.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of South Carolina, 1785-1799, p. 94. This gives a slightly different interpretation to the case from that presented in the earlier minutes, since it indicates that he was only to desist until the full Presbytery had considered the matter. Six ministers were present for his ordination; at the time there were nineteen ministers in the Presbytery.

In line with this, the matter accordingly came before the Synod of the Carolinas a month later.

> A memorial was brought forward and laid before Synod by the Revd James Gilleland [sic] stating his conscientious difficulties in receiving the advice of the presbytery of So Carolina which has enjoined it upon him to be silent in the pulpit on the subject of the emancipation of the Africans.--which injunction Mr. Gilleland declares to be in his apprehension contrary to the counsel of God.--Whereupon, Synod after deliberation upon the matter do concur with the presbytery in advising Mr. Gilleland to content himself with using his utmost endeavor in private to open the way for emancipation, so as to secure our happiness as a people, preserve the peace of the Church, and render them capable of enjoying the blessings of liberty.--Synod is of the opinion to preach publicly against slavery in present circumstances, and to lay it down as the duty of every one to liberate those who are under their care, is that which would lead to disorder, and open the way to great confusion.[1]

Several things are noteworthy about the case of Gilliland. In the first place, it is hard to avoid the impression that his Presbytery was not so much violently opposed to his views,[2] as it was simply uncertain as to the proper course of action. Confronted for the first time with the problem, the Presbytery sought refuge in what seemed to be the least dangerous course, namely, persuading Gilliland to keep quiet, at least until the responsibility could be shifted to Synod.

Second, while Gilliland was forbidden to preach from the pulpit on the question of emancipation, the goal of emancipation was seemingly accepted by Synod as a legitimate concern. He was not forbidden to hold such views, or to urge them upon others. It is clear that the Synod was less than enthusiastic about making emancipation a primary concern, but freedom of conscience was still affirmed.

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Vol. 1, 1788-1799, MS, pp. 198-199. The statement is also found in Foote, NC, p. 294. It is not clear precisely what Gilliland was proposing, but apparently the Synod interpreted it as some form of immediate emancipation.

[2] This is the view of Murray, op. cit., p. 18. He seems to have had access only to the Synod resolution, however. At least one of the six ministers present for Gilliland's ordination--Robert Wilson--was also opposed to slavery and eventually migrated to Ohio with Gilliland.

At the same meeting the Synod of the Carolinas also dealt with two overtures concerning slaves. The first concerned the status of slaves in ecclesiastical trials.

> Is it expedient to admit baptized slaves as witnesses in ecclesiastical judicatories where others cannot be had? which Synod after due consideration answered in the negative.[1]

The second question concerned the religious instruction of the slave population:

> Synod being moved thereto by the Committee of overtures did order their members, and all heads of families under their care possessed of slaves, to be careful to give, not only such verbal instruction to those of mature age as their circumstances will admit; but that they also teach the children to read the Scriptures so as to be able to receive instruction from them; and that each member of Synod use his influence in his respective sphere, that this order be carried into effect, and give an account, from time to time to his respective presbytery, as it may be required of him.--It is the will of Synod that each member read this order to his charge or charges.[2]

Of special interest is the emphasis on instruction by both the ministers and masters, and the encouragement to teach slaves how to read. The effect of this is unknown, although the scant evidence from this early period shows that there was at least some preaching to slaves.[3]

The question of slavery again came to the Synod's attention

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[1]Minutes of the Synod of the Carolina, Vol. 1, 1788-1799, p. 197. It should be recalled that slave evidence was not admitted in legal trials generally. It is probable that an earlier action (in 1791) by the Synod of Virginia also related to slave evidence, although it is not specifically stated. "Through the Committee of overtures it was proposed--'What are the qualifications of those who shall be admitted as Evidences against those who are members of our Churches?'

"It was answered that all credible persons who are admissable in courts of justice may be admitted as Evidences in our respective judicatories." Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, Vol. 1, (1788-1797), p. 77.

[2]Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Vol. 1, 1788-1799, pp. 197-198.

[3]See, for example, the reports of ministers who itinerated as missionaries at the order of the Synod, in Ibid., passim.

in 1799. The actions of 1796 had been circumspect in recommending emancipation, but by 1799 the position of the Synod had become clearer. An overture read as follows:

> That Synod appoint a Committee to correspond with the highest judicatories, Conventions, Associations, and Conferences of the Christian Church, of other denominations within the bounds of Synod, to use their influence with the people under their respective jurisdictions when the subject shall be sufficiently matured in the several churches, that Petitions might be brought forward to our several State Legislatures, in favor of Emancipations, in order to have it on the footing which has obtained in some of the Northern States;--that is,--that all children of slaves, born after the passing of such an act, shall be free at such an age:--which being read and considered was agreed to.[1]

The committee was then appointed, and instructed to report to the next Synod. In the meantime, at least one presbytery (The First Presbytery of South Carolina) discussed the Synod action, apparently in some detail.

> Resolved that notwithstanding Presbytery earnestly pray for, & wish to see the day when the rod of the tyrant & the oppressor shall every where be broken, yet it appears to us, that any attempt at the present, to bring about a legislative reform in this case in this State would not only be attended with want of success, but would be attended with evil consequences to the peace & happiness of our country, & probably be very injurious to those who are in a state of slavery. And as the overture of Synod only recommend the exercise of prudence in the case, it is therefore recommended to Mr. Walker [a member of the Synod's committee from the Presbytery], not to proceed in this business until further advice be had from the Synod. And it is hereby recommended & enjoined on every member of this Presbytery to attend the next meeting of Synod to reconsider this matter; & with this further in view that if such measures are not adopted as may correspond with what appears to us to be duty that those who think proper may enter their protest.[2]

The importance of this memorial of the First Presbytery of South Carolina is difficult to assess. It acknowledges the general goal of emancipation, but the whole tone of the resolution is such as

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[1]Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Vol. 1, 1788-1799, pp. 356-357.

[2]Minutes of the First Presbytery of South Carolina, 1800-1810, MS, Vol. 1, p. 4.

to suggest a strong bias against any concrete action which would lead to emancipation. As we shall see, South Carolina on the whole never was strong in its anti-slavery sentiment, and it is tempting to see in this statement a presentiment of the adamant pro-slavery position of later decades. However, it should be noted that the meeting which passed this resolution had only five of the Presbytery's ten ministers present. Further, the Synod at its 1799 meeting had divided the Presbytery of South Carolina into two presbyteries. By a quirk of geography the leading anti-slavery men seem all to have been in the so-called Second Presbytery of South Carolina. It is doubtful if such a resolution could have been passed--at least as easily--before the division of the old Presbytery.

It is impossible to tell whether or not the resolution of the First Presbytery had any decided effect on the outcome of the Synod's original plan, but by the time of the 1800 meeting of Synod the committee charged with the responsibility of putting the 1799 Synod resolution into effect had decided that the goal was not feasible.

> Your committee report, that though it is our ardent wish that the object contemplated in the overture should be obtained; yet, as it appears to us that matters are not yet matured for carrying it forward, especially in the southern part of our States, your committee are of the opinion that the overture should now be laid aside; and that it be enjoined upon every member of this Synod to use his influence to carry into effect the directions and recommendations of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, and those additionally made by the General Assembly, for the instruction of those who are in a state of slavery, to prepare them better for a state of freedom, when such shall be contemplated by the legislatures of our southern States.[1]

The reasons for this retreat are not stated. The committee appointed by the previous Synod meeting had not had a meeting, and thus presumably had had no chance to contact other denominations.[2] Perhaps

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Vol. 2, 1800-1812, MS, pp. 19-20. The text is also found in Foote, NC, p. 304.

[2] See Ibid., pp. 14-15.

the resolution of the First Presbytery of South Carolina, plus other opposition of a more informal nature, led the Synod to abandon the project.

These actions of 1799 and 1800 are important in assessing the view of slavery of Presbyterians in this area of the South at this time, and they deserve far more attention than they have been given by historians in the field.[1] In some ways the resolution passed by the Synod in 1799 was the most concrete proposal ever put forward by a Southern Presbyterian judicatory for the eventual abolition of slavery. The action also shows a large reservoir of anti-slavery sentiment in the Synod; even the final Synod resolution of 1800 looks forward to the eventual abolition of slavery. At the same time, the existence of much resistance to emancipation must be conceded; the resolution of the First Presbytery of South Carolina indicates that its members felt that legislative action at that time would be unwise, regardless of the exact plan adopted. It is also of interest (especially in light of later views) that the Synod proposed to use political means--urging members of churches to bring petitions to the legislatures--to achieve its desired end.[2] The failure of the Synod to follow through on its initial plan may also have indirectly influenced those of abolitionist sentiments in the Synod to migrate to Ohio a few years later.

About the same time that the Synod of the Carolinas was dealing with questions related to slavery, similar issues came before

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[1]The resolutions are not mentioned by Murray; E.T. Thompson gives a paragraph to the 1800 Synod action, but seems to have been unaware of the 1799 Synod action or the 1800 action of the First Presbytery of South Carolina, op. cit., p. 327.

[2]Another example of a Southern church judicatory seeking to influence legislation occurred in 1804, when the Second Presbytery of South Carolina petitioned the legislature "respecting a marriage law." Minutes of the Second Presbytery of South Carolina, 1800-1810, MS, Vol. 1, pp. 63, 64.

the Synod of Virginia. An overture relating to slavery from the Presbytery of West Lexington, Kentucky, which was at this time part of the Synod of Virginia, came before the Synod in 1800. The memorial to Synod had stressed that slavery was a great moral evil, and continued slaveholding might even be grounds for barring an individual from communion. Wishing to know if their judgment was correct, the Presbytery sought the counsel of the Synod. In a lengthy reply the Synod affirmed "That so many thousands of our fellow creatures should in this land of liberty, and assylum for the oppressed, be held in chains, is a reflection to us peculiarly afflictive."[1] The reply called attention to the recent actions of the General Assembly,[2] and then called upon all slaveholders to "prepare by a suitable education the young among them for a state of freedom, and to liberate them as soon as they shall appear to be duly qualified for that high privilege...."[3] However, the Synod refused to bar slaveholders from communion, saying that such action "would, it appears to us, be more likely to confirm such as err in this instance in their errors than to reclaim them."[4] The Synod then dealt with the deeper issue of the sinfulness of slavery with a logic not unlike that of later abolitionists, although their answer was radically different:

> If the holding of our fellow creatures in a state of servitude be absolutely, & in every circumstance a moral evil or a sin, a total emancipation ought immediately to

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[1]Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, Vol. 2, 1800, MS, p. 54.

[2]The Presbytery of Transylvania had earlier (in 1795) petitioned the General Assembly along similar lines. The Assembly had noted the prevalence of different opinions on slavery in the Church, and refused to label slaveholding as a bar to communion. The Assembly likewise called attention to the 1787 action of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. GA Minutes, Vol. 2, p. 103.

[3]Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, Vol. 2, 1800, pp. 54-55.

[4]Ibid., p. 55.

> take place A measure which would, there is reason to apprehend, be attended with many & great evils, and that moral as well as political; and which their [the Presbytery's] good sense of moderation did not permit them to recommend....that it is a duty to adopt proper measures for their emancipation will it is presumed, be universally conceded--But with respect to the measures best calculated to accomplish that important purpose, & the time necessary to give them full effect, different sentiments may be entertained by the true disciples of the Great Friend of Man....And the advocates for emancipation ought to beware, but by too much precipitation they should obstruct the good work in which they are engaged.[1]

In this is seen the dilemma of Southern Presbyterians at this time, as well as the dilemma of the South generally. Slavery was acknowledged to be an evil that should be abolished. However, the precise means by which emancipation was to be accomplished, without bringing about social and political chaos, was uncertain and unknown.

The issue of slavery apparently faded into the background for over a decade, and was only returned to prominence by the celebrated case of George Bourne, of Lexington Presbytery in Virginia. Bourne's case has recently received much attention, and it will not be our purpose to pursue all details of the case. However, Bourne's trial is of great significance, for it is the only case in this period of an individual brought to trial in the Southern section of the Church because of abolitionist convictions.[2]

A native of England, Bourne had migrated to the United States around 1805, and settled in Baltimore, where he edited a

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[1] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[2] Full information on Bourne's life can be found in John W. Christie and Dwight L. Dumond, George Bourne and The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable, (Baltimore: The Historical Society of Delaware, 1969). Briefer accounts will be found in A. Murray, op. cit., pp. 20-28; E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 328-332; and Foote, Va. (2nd), pp. 360-365. Our account is based largely on Christie's research and the Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington.

struggling paper. A few years later he settled in the Valley of Virginia, became pastor of a small congregation near Harrisonburg, and was received by the Presbytery of Lexington in 1812. He seems to have been accepted by his ministerial brethren, as they sent him to the General Assembly as their commissioner the next two years. Bourne and a friend, A. B. Davidson (also a minister in Lexington Presbytery), established a printing office to aid in the distribution of tracts and books, mostly from the pen of Bourne. Sometime before 1815 Bourne began to develop decided anti-slavery convictions, and had gone so far as to exclude slaveholders from his congregation. The exact reasons for his new convictions are unclear, although among them was the fact that the Presbyterian Church's Larger Catechism included not only a condemnation of man-stealing (in Question 142), but further included a footnote to the question which equated man-stealing with any form of human slavery. The footnote was technically not a part of the Larger Catechism, but it persuaded Bourne that slavery was a flagrant violation of the standards of the Presbyterian Church.

In 1815 Bourne was again appointed a commissioner to the General Assembly. He presented an overture to the committee on overtures which asked, in effect, if holding slaves was inconsistent with being a Christian. Not permitted a place on the docket of the committee (it was barred by a fellow member of Lexington Presbytery, Dr. William Hill), Bourne nevertheless brought the question before the Assembly. In what was apparently an emotional speech, Bourne accused some of his fellow Virginia Presbyterian clergymen of mistreating their slaves. A committee of the Assembly prepared a resolution on slavery which in essence repeated previous actions on slavery, but this failed to satisfy Bourne.[1]

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[1] GA Minutes, Vol. 2 (1815), pp. 585-586.

When Bourne returned to Virginia he found that his remarks had created a storm of resentment. His anti-slavery stand almost certainly had its part in the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with his church a few months later. In December, 1815, the Presbytery of Lexington brought him to trial.

> Common fame charges the Rev. George Bourne, our Commissioner to the Last General Assembly with having brought very heavy charges in the Assembly against some ministers of the Gospel in Virginia, whom he refused to name, respecting their treatment of slaves, the tendency of which was to bring reproach upon the character of the Virginia Clergy in general. And also since his return with having made several unwarrantable and unchristian charges against many of the members of the Presbyterian Church in relation to slavery.[1]

Several witnesses were called, who recounted Bourne's charges in the Assembly, and three letters from Bourne to his one-time friend, A. B. Davidson, were likewise introduced. The latter contained numerous strong statements against slavery, especially the inconsistency Bourne saw between holding slaves and preaching the Gospel, and urged the immediate cessation of all slaveholding by those prefessing to be Christians.[2] The decision of the Presbytery was to depose him from the ministry, and Bourne almost immediately left Virginia.[3]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, Vol. 6, 1814-1817, pp. 54-55. The charges quoted were presented at the regular Fall meeting in late September; the trial itself was held at a pro re nata meeting in December.

[2] "...for the Devil can make better pretensions to be a Christian than a slaveholder--the one is the Father of all evil, but he is no Hypocrite--but a Christian slaveholder!! is an ever-lasting Liar and Thief and Deceiver....No blasphemy is greater than for a Slave-holder to attempt to preach from the Book delivered to Jesus in Nazareth." G. Bourne to A. B. Davidson, July 28, 1815, MS, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The Simon Gratz Collection also contains the other two letters (August 10 and August 25, 1815), which were admitted as evidence. The text of the letters is found in the Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, Vol. 6, 1814-1817, pp. 65-95, and is also reprinted in substance in Christie and Dumond, op. cit., pp. 35-46.

[3] Christie and Dumond point out that there were only three ministers present for the trial. One was John McCue, who was one of the unnamed (at this time) individuals Bourne had specifically cited for mistreatment of slaves; the second, G. A. Baxter, was the brother of another

This was not the end of the Bourne case, however, for Bourne appealed to the General Assembly. Because of the failure of the Presbytery's stated clerk to send the minutes on the case of the General Assembly, the case did not come up until 1817. In a rather strange decision the Assembly ruled that the charges against Bourne had not been fully substantiated and that the sentence given him was too severe, but then sent the case back to Presbytery for retrial.[1] In an involved trial the Presbytery issued additional charges against him and again deposed him from the ministry.[2] The action was forwarded to the General Assembly, which, after debate, supported the action of the Presbytery.[3]

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individual accused by Bourne. Christie and Dumond suggest that the presence of such a small number of ministers indicates that the rest of the Presbytery wanted nothing to do with the trial at this stage. Op. cit., pp. 47-48.

Bourne went to Germantown, Pennsylvania, where he became pastor of a church. It was here that he completed his book The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable, which he had started in Virginia. This volume had wide influence on later abolitionists, especially William Lloyd-Garrison, and undoubtedly the strong statements it contained influenced some to oppose Bourne in the later ecclesiastical trials of his case. The volume is republished in Christie and Dumond, op. cit., pp. 103-206. They list four extant copies of the original; a fifth copy is in the Historical Foundation, Montreat, and contains the interesting note in pencil on the flyleaf, "A book of fanaticism pure and simple!"

In later years Bourne was active in abolitionist activities in the North, and joined the Dutch Reformed Church as editor of one of their periodicals. He was also editor of the Liberator, Garrison's newspaper, during Garrison's visit to Great Britain in 1833, although no public announcement was made of that fact. He likewise wrote voluminously for the Liberator. See Christie and Dumond, Ibid., pp. 83-98 for a discussion of Bourne's influence on Garrison. He never returned to the South.

[1] GA Minutes, Vol. 2, p. 646.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, Vol. 6, pp. 152-161; 167-179; Vol. 7, (1817-1821), pp. 3-18; 22-28; 30-48. It should be recalled that Bourne was tried in absentia. The case was never brought before the Synod of Virginia, but was taken directly to the General Assembly.

[3] GA Minutes, Vol. 2, p. 682. The same General Assembly (1818) passed a long resolution on slavery, which is the most significant statement ever made on the subject by the Assembly. The resolution stated that slavery was "totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ" and that "it is manifestly the duty of all Christians who

The main question for our consideration about the Bourne

enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors, to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible throughout the world." The resolution went on to say that immediate emancipation was not a proper answer, as it would lead to a greater wrong; slaves must be prepared for freedom. "But we do think, that our country ought to be governed in this matter by no other consideration than an honest and impartial regard to the happiness of the injured party, uninfluenced by the expense or inconvenience which such a regard may involve. We, therefore, warn all who belong to our denomination of Christians against unduly extending this plea of necessity; against making it a cover for the love and practice of slavery, or a pretense for not using efforts that are lawful and practicable, to extinguish this evil." The statement further urged the religious instruction of the slaves, and urged lower judicatories to deal with such abuses as physical mistreatment or the separation of slave families. The full text will be found in GA Minutes, Vol. 2, pp. 692-694.

Christie and Dumond have contended that the 1818 action "is a masterpiece of equivocation" which lacked any means of execution. Op. cit., p. 60. They also see in the 1818 act a deliberate maneuver on the part of the Assembly to balance the action taken several days earlier on the Bourne case, and that, in return for the deposition of Bourne, Southern delegates agreed to the resolution on slavery, although it did not reflect their true sentiments. This position is also taken by Murray (op. cit., pp. 26-28), and George Marsden, The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 91. E. T. Thompson rejects this as an oversimplification at best (op. cit. pp. 331-332), and points to the large reservoir of anti-slavery sentiment at this time among Southern clergymen. We would agree with Thompson in this judgment. In addition, the position of Christie and Dumond fails to account for the 1818 resolution; why did the Assembly approve such a strong condemnation of slavery, when it could undoubtedly have pursued the course it had taken previously of calling attention to previous Assembly actions, or else have passed a milder statement or tabled the matter. As we shall see, two decades later, when the issue of the status of the 1818 action became hotly debated in the South, Southern churchmen without exception looked on it as a strong anti-slavery document. In the eyes of the 1818 Assembly there was undoubtedly no contradiction in condemning Bourne and also passing the resolution on slavery. Bourne advocated a policy of immediate emancipation regardless of consequences, and affirmed that slaveholding was sin in every circumstance; the Assembly rejected immediate emancipation by contending that an evil was not to be solved by adopting a greater evil, and likewise refused to brand all slaveholding as sin, noting that in many cases people were slaveholders by inheritance rather than by their own choice. Furthermore, Bourne's intemperate remarks made his position vulnerable. "Had he maintained these sentiments in a manner becoming the decencies of life, the public mind, not then feverish on the subject of slavery, but actually inclining to emancipation, might have borne it in silence as the extreme of a well-meaning man, and been, perhaps, carried on in its course." Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 361.

case is, What does it indicate about the attitude toward slavery among Southern Presbyterians, especially those in Virginia? Does the deposition of Bourne by his ministerial colleagues indicate the decline of anti-slavery convictions and the start of a decided pro-slavery stance?

The most important fact to emerge from Bourne's case is that there was no toleration among Southern Presbyterians for abolitionist views.[1] This had been indicated earlier in the situation of James Gilliland of South Carolina, but it becomes clear with George Bourne. It would be wrong, however, to see in this a reversal of position on the part of Southern Presbyterians, for there never was a time when they believed that immediate emancipation was the answer. However, the Bourne case indicates little more than this about the thinking of Southern Presbyterians. In fact, many of the men who were prominent in the Bourne trial can be identified as holding anti-slavery views of greater or lesser degree.[2] At the same time, the evidence presented by Bourne in his trial shows that some men, at least, had very few scruples about slavery. In addition, it is clear that any movement to discipline church members for slaveholding, even in the distant future,

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[1]This is seen clearly in the only unpublished item we have been able to discover in connection with the Bourne case. "I wish you would get a commission from your Presby & come along to the assembly, & I will, Deo volenta, go with you. Geo Bourne of Lexington Presby has been deposed for calling all Presbn. Preachers & people who, own and keep, buy, sell or hire slaves, Thieves, lyers, hypocrites & perpetual sinners & he has appealed to the Gen. Assembly. We must muster strong from the South, to support Lexington Presby. & to defend our selves. I wish you would come along & bring as many as your Presby has a right to send." Benjamin H. Rice (Petersburg, Va.) to William McPheeters (Raleigh, N.C.), April 5, 1816. MS letter in State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina; photostat in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond. Rice was the brother of John Holt Rice, who was one of the leading clergymen in Virginia. General Assembly minutes for 1816 indicate that Benjamin and John Rice both were commissioners, but McPheeters' presbytery (Orange) was not represented. Benjamin Rice was appointed to an Assembly committee to investigate the Bourne case, but the lack of proper minutes from Lexington Presbytery delayed action until the following year.

[2]See infra, pp. 72, 86-87.

was not likely to meet with any success. In short, Bourne's case shows two things: strict abolition was not to be tolerated, and slavery was not to be branded as sin.[1]

We have so far been concerned with official statements of various Synods and Presbyteries on slavery. Of equal importance is an investigation of the position of leading Southern Presbyterians on the question of slavery. Two attitudes will be seen in the course of our investigation. First, many Southern Presbyterians although admitting that slavery was an evil, seem to have accepted it as part of the social structure without giving the matter much thought. Second, there were many who affirmed that slavery was a serious evil which should be abolished by any feasible means; such a position was usually the result of some degree of reflection, and it is no surprise therefore that those who were leaders in other areas of the Church's life very often were leaders in assuming an anti-slavery position.

The existence of a group with the first attitude is clear mainly through the silence of many on the question of slavery. Perhaps typical was the attitude of J.D. Paxton of Virginia, who later moved to a free state.

> While I had, very cordially, voted for the paper passed by the General Assembly of 1818, I had not paid much attention to the general subject of slavery. My father owned a family of slaves, and I had grown up with them; and I had the common opinion that slavery was wrong, still I had not much moral feeling on the matter.[2]

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[1]The dichotomy between 'sin' and 'evil' should be noted here. For many, slavery was an evil but not a sin; the former implied a passive quality, while the latter implied an active relationship. In this view slavery was like a disease; to be sick was an evil thing, although it could not be held to be sinful. The analogy is not exact, of course, but the difference between the terms was never fully deliniated.

[2]/M.W. Paxton/, A Memoir of J.D. Paxton, D.D., Late of Princeton, Indiana. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870), pp. 73-74.

It may be that a similar insensitivity is reflected in the fact that several Southern Presbyterian periodicals carried advertisements for runaway slaves.[1]

The second attitude was prominent especially in Virginia, although it can be detected elsewhere.[2] Moses Hoge, president of Hampden-Sidney College (established by Virginia Presbyterians) and the first theology professor appointed by the Synod of Virginia, had serious questions about slavery. In a letter written apparently to one of his sons who had settled in Ohio, Dr. Hoge looked forward to his retirement:

> Moreover, my objections to the Slavery of this country have always been strong & are becoming more so....I wish your bothers to settle there also; and in that case should my life be prolonged I would wish to spend my last days in that country.[3]

The son in question was probably James Hoge, who as early as 1805 had gone to the Ohio frontier as a missionary and had found the country to

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[1] The North Carolina Telegraph, published by Robert Hall Morrison during 1826, carried occasional advertisements for runaways. The Missionary, published by Benjamin Gildersleeve in Hancock County, Georgia, carried a large number of advertisements for both runaways and slave sales. So blatant were the advertisements that the paper was condemned by a newspaper in the North, but Gildersleeve refused to suspend such notices. (See Missionary, March 22, 1824, for his comments on the charge.) Stroupe says he also was condemned by a Methodist paper in Charleston for publishing such advertisements in the Georgia Reporter and Christian Gazette, which superseded the Missionary in 1826. Op. cit., pp. 80-81. Gildersleeve was the most important editor in the Southern Presbyterian Church, becoming in 1827 editor of the Charleston Observer and of the Watchman and Observer (Richmond) from 1845 until his retirement in 1855. We have discovered no slave advertisements in these later publications, however.

[2] The researcher is somewhat hampered in discovering the prevalence of this attitude for several reasons. First, comparatively few letters and diaries of Southern Presbyterians are extant from this period. Second, there were very few Presbyterian newspapers and periodicals printed this early, and files of these are often incomplete. Also, many of the strongest anti-slavery sentiments were voiced by those who eventually left the South; they cannot, therefore, be judged as typical of the mass of Presbyterians.

[3] John Blair Hoge, op. cit., p. 156.

his liking:

> Several applications have been made to me to settle in this state. ...I would rather reside on the Scioto or its waters, or the Miamies than any place I have ever seen. Here are no slaves, and since I came to this state my opinion on slavery has experienced considerable change.[1]

James, however, discouraged his father coming to Ohio because of the rugged conditions.[2] His brother, Samuel Davies Hoge, also went to Ohio, in 1821, because of his opposition to slavery.[3]

The most consistent and articulate voice of criticism against slavery in Virginia during this period was that of John Holt Rice. One of the most outstanding Churchmen of his day, Rice's career included several pastorates, the Synod's theological professorship, and the editorship of the second and third periodicals established in the South under Presbyterian auspices, the Christian Monitor and the Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine. In addition, he was moderator of the General Assembly in 1819, founder of the Virginia Bible Society and one of the organizers of the American Bible Society, and was elected president of Princeton College in 1822, which he declined.[4] Rice's

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[1] James Hoge ("near Chilichothe") to Moses Hoge (Shepherdstown, Va.), MS letter, December 5, 1805. Hoge Letters, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Montreat.

[2] See his letters of March 15 and July 26, 1809, and December 19, 1810. MS Letters, Hoge Papers, Montreat.

[3] E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 337. The sketch of S. D. Hoge in Sprague gives no hint of the reason for his removal. Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, pp. 483-486. His intention is clear from a letter written in 1818 to his brother, John Blair Hoge. "I do not publish it here, but I can trust it to faithful ears that I am willing to 'hear proposals' from any respectable people, north of this place, on the subject of a settlement among them. My desire to leave the land of slaves is not at all abated, nor is it likely to abate." S. D. Hoge to John B. Hoge, September 18, 1818. MS Letters, Hoge Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Both of his sons, Moses Drury Hoge and William J. Hoge, returned to Virginia and became pro-slavery apologists.

[4] No modern biography of Rice exists. The standard biography of Rice is that of William Maxwell, op. cit. Maxwell includes numerous letters of Rice, although they have been edited; the originals are not extant. A

views of slavery are found mainly in his articles.

Rice's first systematic statement on slavery appeared in the Christian Monitor of January 18, 1817. Rice said that the work was "inserted on the particular request of a respectable member of the Society of Friends";[1] whether it was actually written by a Quaker or by Rice himself is difficult to judge, but the sentiments were certainly Rice's. In introducing the article Rice commented that slavery was a subject

> "on which there can be no variety of opinion, except as to the time, and the manner of getting rid of the evil.... He who will devise, and carry into effect a measure of deliverance from this evil will deserve to stand next to the father of his country--the immortal Washington."[2]

The article itself pointed out the hypocrisy of the nation:

> ...we endeavor to make the rest of the world believe, that liberty and equality, are the characteristics of our country. Let us compare these professions with the real state of things....Witness the oppressive servitude, under which, we compel thousands of our fellow creatures to drag out their miserable lives;--deprived of privileges which we hold most sacred and inviolable:--their actions controled:--their persons insulted and abused, in a manner, at which the feelings of humanity revolt: and, to crown all, we make a direct attempt to prevent the cultivation of their minds;--as if we had deliberately determined to treat them as beasts, and to reduce them as near as possible, to the condition of the brute creation.[3]

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later, somewhat more satisfactory, account is P.B. Price, The Life of the Reverend John Holt Rice, D.D., (Richmond: Union Theological Seminary, 1963), "Historical Transcripts No. 1." Foote gives an extended section to Rice, and includes some letters not found in Maxwell. Foote, Va. (2nd), pp. 241-260; 269-280; 301-310; 319-340; 365-456. An attempt to analyze other extant letters of Rice is Julius W. Melton, Jr., Pioneering Presbyter: A Collection and Analysis of the Letters of John Holt Rice, Unpublished Th.M. thesis, Union Theological Seminary, 1959. Briefer sketches will be found in Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, pp. 325-341; H. A. White, op. cit., pp. 212-220; and DAB, Vol. 15, pp. 541-542. An attempt, only partially successful, to evaluate Rice's many contributions to the cause of education is Alden L. Carlson, The Life and Educational Contributions of John Holt Rice. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Virginia.

[1] Christian Monitor, Vol. 2, p. 147.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Christian Monitor, January 18, 1817, Vol. 2, p. 149.

The author continued by acknowledging that many of his readers had probably grown up with slavery and accepted it as a normal condition. However, slavery was a violation of all principles of civil and natural rights. "It is not only absolutely right, to devise some remedy for this evil, but it is absolutely necessary. We have shut our eyes, and stopped our ears too long."[1] The first step in the abolition of slavery must be to excite public attention; beyond that, however, he had no specific suggestions.

Several years later Rice again gave full notice to the subject of slavery in his Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, the successor to the Christian Monitor.[2] An extended article, apparently not written by Rice, sought to come to a more definite conclusion about the course to be followed in regard to slavery by urging full support for the recently-organized American Colonization Society. Acknowledging that immediate emancipation was out of the question, the writer urged the education of slaves for eventual freedom and colonization; this would include a comprehensive program of teaching the slaves to read. Opinions might differ on the wisdom of this, he admitted, but he felt there could be no argument about the goal of emancipation.

> It seems to be generally admitted that slavery is the greatest political evil which has ever entered the United States.---...The only theory I could ever form on this subject which appeared consistent both with reason and divine revelation is, that slavery is lawful so long as necessity requires the continuence of it, and no longer.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 152.

[2] Richard Beale Davis has termed the Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine "the nearest thing to a critical journal published in Virginia during the Jeffersonian period." Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia, 1790-1830: (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 134.

[3] "Thoughts on Slavery" Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 2, pp. 293, 298, July, 1819. This pragmatic test for the continuence of slavery avoided branding slavery as a sin, and, in the author's view, dealt with the problem of the existence of slavery in New Testament times.

At the same time, he argued that eventual emancipation should not result in the amalgamation of the races, nor would it be expected that they would be given full civil privileges in the United States. The best answer was clearly colonization. With these sentiments John Holt Rice fully agreed, as his introductory comments show.[1] Several years later Rice again expressed his basic opposition to slavery, calling it "a most grievous calamity, entailed on us by the cupidity and folly of others."[2]

Rice's view was echoed by other leading Virginia Presbyterians. Conrad Speece, perhaps the leading minister in the Valley of Virginia, was an advocate of emancipation.

> Mr. Speece believed that the gospel would be the great persuasive means to accomplish an end he devoutly desired, universal emancipation; he deprecated all force, believing that violent measures for the eradication of slavery would cause its perpetuity. The progression in which he believed was--the diffusion of the gospel--peace in man's heart and with his fellow-man--and universal freedom.[3]

At the same time, Speece, in common with others, was no friend of immediate abolition; he was a principle figure in the trial before Lexington Presbytery of George Bourne.

The period of transition in Virginia and North Carolina began gradually, as in other sections of the South. By 1827 Rice was expressing doubts about the possibility or desirability of emancipation, and by 1828 new movements were afoot which would lead to new convictions on the subject. However, as late as the end of 1828 Amasa Converse, editor of the weekly Visitor and Telegraph of Richmond, could commend the formation of a worldwide emancipation society in England, and say

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[1] Ibid., p. 293.

[2] Ibid., Vol. 4, (June, 1821), p. 309.

[3] Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 365. Some of Foote's comments on Speece's attitude toward slavery must be weighed judiciously, as he is obviously using Speece to condemn abolitionist views at the time of writing (1855).

that "the abolition of slavery all over the world...ought not to be deemed chimerical."[1]

The attitude of Presbyterians in the South Carolina-Georgia area presents a slightly different picture. On one hand, some of the most notable examples of decided anti-slavery sentiment are to be found there in the early stages of this period. On the other hand, this

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[1]"The Emancipation of the World," Visitor and Telegraph, December 6, 1828. An interesting sidelight on the attitudes of Presbyterians (and others) in Virginia and North Carolina during this earliest period is provided by the career of John Chavis. Chavis was a free black (possibly a native of the West Indies). A strong tradition says he was educated at Princeton under Dr. John Witherspoon, and also studied at Washington Academy, founded by Presbyterians, near Lexington, Virginia. In 1799 he was brought under the care of Lexington Presbytery as a candidate, and a year later he was licensed by the same body. In 1801 the General Assembly appointed him a missionary to slaves, and for several years he continued this work under the Assembly, and later under the Synod of Virginia. Around 1808 he opened a school in Raleigh, North Carolina. It operated on a dual basis; white children were taught during the day, and black children were taught at night. A number of prominent men apparently were graduates of his school; among them was Senator Willie P. Magnum, whose parents in the Library of Congress contain an interesting series of letters from Chavis (virtually the only Chavis papers extant). In addition Chavis was accepted as a social equal by the whites in his area, being a guest at their tables with some frequency. He also was active as a preacher, and was invited with some frequency to speak in predominently white churches. His work was severely curtailed after the Nat Turner insurrection in 1831 due to an act of the North Carolina legislature forbidding preaching by free blacks. Although he seems to have continued to teach school, he became very pressed financially, and appealed several times to Orange Presbytery for relief. His own view of slavery was that it was an evil, but that there was little hope of any relief from it in the foreseeable future and that blacks should accept their position; in the 1830's he expressed strong opposition to abolitionist agitation. On Chavis see "Notes on John Chavis" by Edgar W. Knight. North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. 7, No. 3 (July, 1930), pp. 326-345; Ellison A. Smyth, "A History of Presbyterianism in Rockbridge County, Virginia." Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Washington and Lee University (1938), Part Two, Chapter One; "John Chavis," MS notes, W. H. Ruffner Papers, Montreat; E.T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 208-209. A catalogue of references to Chavis in General Assembly and presbytery minutes will be found in the Ruffner Papers. In addition to the letters to Willie Magnum in the Library of Congress, a few letters from Chavis to his banker, John Haywood, are found in the Ernest Haywood Papers, University of North Carolina.

sentiment dies out at an early date, and remaining anti-slavery feelings were only of the mildest sort. Further, what we have termed "The Period of Transition" is more difficult to detect in this region, and comes at an earlier time than in other areas.

We have noted previously the anti-slavery position of William C. Davis, and the case of James Gilliland and the official actions precipitated in his Presbytery and Synod because of his scruples on slavery.[1] Further insight on Davis and Gilliland, as well as the general attitude toward slavery among Presbyterians in South Carolina is furnished by a letter from a farmer in Abbeville County, in the central Piedmont area, to one of his sons in Pennsylvania.

> Emancipation is another Bone of Contention---and will be greater if ever the Government does act Consistent with the principals on which it is founded, & allow the same privileges to others they Claim to themselves--
> The Presbytery of So Carolina has appointed Mr. Davis (your old School mate) a Commissioner to the Genl Assembly he was the first Vender of the Doctrine of Freedom to Africans, in this country. He has some followers tho few. Mr Gilliland I believe is the only one besides himself that ventured to preach from the pulpit, that it was Sinful to Deprive Mankind of the rights that God and Nature bestowed on them. It is a curious Argt and Serves to show the prevalence of Interest Inclination and Custom in the decision of any point. I never saw the man that would Say that Slavery was lawful, But they say, we have given our property for these Africans--their condition is bettered ...[sic] and they are not in a situation to enjoy Freedom--Nay the laws of our State is against their being free--However you may be better acquaint [sic] with the Question than I am; your State having made Some Steps towards the abolition of that Practice So dishonorable to the Human Species.[2]

Robert Wilson, another son of the writer of this letter,

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[1] Supra, pp. 53-55.

[2] The letter is not signed, but on the basis of other letters is clearly from John Wilson (Crowther Creek, South Carolina) to Rev. Samuel Wilson (Big Spring, Pennsylvania), MS letter, March 7, 1797. Leonidas Chalmers Glenn Papers, University of North Carolina. Samuel Wilson was later a professor at Union Seminary in Virginia, and did not share the anti-slavery sentiments of his father or brother.

had more decided views on slavery. In a significant letter to his brother in Pennsylvania he declared his position:

> One of my principle objections to this country is the practice of slavery so prevalent among the people: which, after the most serious and impartial investigation, of which I am capable, I cannot avoid thinking an enormous crime....You speak on the Subject as tho the only evil complained of in the practice was the injury done to the Slave--or the privation of Liberty, to an individual. But this is not the case: the evil to the Slave is a natural one but to the Master it is a moral one. Liberty, it is admitted on all hands, is a natural right, that is, a right which the religion of nature gives every individual--to take away this is to act contrary to the will of God manifested in creation & therefore immoral. Now sir you have dexterously contrived a method of doing away the natural evil of the practice, can you not also contrive some healing plaster for a Sore conscience, galled by an immoral practice. I suppose you will not admit that there is any sore needing a plaster & therefore give yourself no trouble about it, but please read the notes on the sins forbidden in the Eighth commandment in the American Confession, new edition, & then ask what is manstealing. But to be serious--Slavery has, & continues to, give me much uneasiness: I have felt it my duty as a public character to bear testimony against it, & shall continue to do so until I can see otherwise than I do. I pray God to give me light if I am in darkness & wisdom & firmness to manage my cause if I am in the right. This very matter will probably divide the churches in the states & Slavery will be made a term of communion--or considered a sufficient immorality to exclude from it--[1]

Robert Wilson's reference to the note in the Larger Catechism which equated manstealing with slavery in any form shows that George Bourne was not the only person affected by the statement.[2] His appeal to natural rights is likewise an interesting insight on the influence of such concepts on some in the South.

Similar sentiments, although not as strong, were voiced by

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[1]Robert Wilson (Abbeville County, S.C.) to Samuel Wilson (Big Spring, Pennsylvania), March 27, 1799. MS letter, Leonidas Chalmers Glenn Papers, University of North Carolina. It is clear that the two brothers have had previous correspondence on the subject.

[2]The footnote was excinded by the 1816 General Assembly; technically it had not been ratified properly when the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church had been adopted. See Christie and Dumond, op. cit., p. 18.

John Witherspoon, a descendant of the noted president of Princeton.

> Sally is with our brother King at the legislature. He is a good worthy man and I hope may do good among them. What a pity it is, yea what a shame, that some of our pious members in the legislature do not come forward and advocate the negro's cause. Are we to sit still & see the cause of slavery entailed upon our children's children, and great grandchildren's grandchildren?...We need a Sharp, a Wilberforce, a Clarkson, in our Southern legislatures--but alas--our great men are poisoned by, that bane of religion and curse of our republic, The desire of popularity--It is this which keeps them dumb against reason, common sense, & conscience.[1]

He then acknowledged that he was "much pressed in Spirit" to speak on the matter in an address he was to give before a Bible society meeting in Raleigh; whether he did or not is unknown.

Witherspoon's voice is significant not only for his position, but for the fact that very shortly he would join those whose silence he condemned. A series of events would soon cause a shift in opinion, or at least in the expression of opinion, in the South Carolina-Georgia area. Anti-slavery sentiment, always fragile in the deep South, was soon a thing of the past among Presbyterians.

In the earliest period Presbyterianism had much less strength in the Southwestern areas than in the Virginia-North Carolina and South Carolina-Georgia sections. However, the few records which are extant give witness to a stronger anti-slavery sentiment than in any other section of the Southern Church; further, the decline in this attitude would come later than in the other areas.

In spite of fervent pleas for missionaries, Presbyterians generally were a decided minority in the relatively new settlements of the Southwest. In 1825, for example, the combined population of

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[1]John Witherspoon (Camden, S.C.) to John McDowell, November 17, 1819. MS letter, McDowell Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society.

Mississippi and Louisiana was about 230,000; there were, however, only eleven Presbyterian ministers in the area.[1] The important city of New Orleans, with a population exceeding 50,000 had only one Presbyterian church.[2] The Presbyteries of North Alabama and Alabama, covering all of Alabama, in 1825 had seventeen ministers and twenty-eight churches; the average membership in each was about thirty.[3] The exception to this rather bleak picture was Tennessee, which had been settled longer and had managed to draw a comparatively larger number of men. By 1830 there were seventy-one ministers in the State, with five presbyteries and ninety-six churches.[4]

It was within Tennessee that anti-slavery sentiment among Presbyterians was most pronounced, both in comparison with other areas of the Southwest and with the South generally. The concentration of this sentiment was in the eastern part of the State, partly because Presbyterians were more numerous there and (almost certainly) partly because the mountainous terrain made a slave-based plantation economy unfeasible.[5]

On an official level Tennessee Presbyterians gave at least one expression of support for the goal of emancipation. At its October, 1817, meeting the newly-formed Synod of Tennessee became one of the

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[1] E. H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Revised Edition. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1864), Vol. 2, p. 242.

[2] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 342.

[3] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 392.

[4] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 325.

[5] This is the conclusion of Asa E. Martin, "The Anti-Slavery Societies of Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Magazine, December, 1915, p. 275. For a table showing the relative scarcity of slaves in East Tennessee in comparison with the other two major natural divisions of the State see Caleb Patterson, The Negro in Tennessee (originally published 1922; reprint edition New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), p. 212.

earliest Southern ecclesiastical bodies to back the American Colonization Society, and hinted that colonization and emancipation were closely related:

> We wish you, therefore, to know, that within our bounds the public sentiment appears clearly and decidedly in your favor....We ardently wish that your exertions and the best influence of all philanthropists may be united, to meliorate the condition of human society, and especially of its most degraded classes, till liberty, religion, and happiness shall be the enjoyment of the whole family of man.[1]

The resolution becomes more significant when placed in the immediate context of East Tennessee. Less than two years before the Manumission Society of Tennessee had been formed, consisting of sixteen branch societies. The society was dominated by Quakers and Presbyterians, although members of other denominations were also active.[2] The official policy of the Society included the gradual abolition of slavery, and in 1816 the Society had petitioned Congress, urging the purchase of land in Africa for the colonization of free blacks.[3] The annual meeting of the Society that same year addressed a letter to the various religious denominations setting forth the purpose of the Society, and urging cooperation in the work of emancipation.[4] Although there is no direct evidence, it seems probable that the Synod resolution of 1817 was passed partly in response to the work of the Society; it would

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[1]"Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color, 1818," quoted by Patterson, op.cit., p. 143. The original minutes of the Synod are not extant during this period. On the colonization movement see Early L. Fox, The American Colonization Society, 1817-1840 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1917), and P. J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

[2]Martin, op. cit., passim; see especially pp. 264, 274.

[3]Gordon E. Finnie, "The Antislavery Movement in the South, 1789-1836; Its Rise and Decline and its Contribution to Abolitionism in the West." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1962, p. 200.

[4]Martin, op. cit., p. 266.

certainly at least have been interpreted by many as a tacit endorsement of the Society and its goals.

The extent to which Presbyterians in East Tennessee held anti-slavery convictions is more clearly seen by examining the views of specific individuals. Among the earliest Presbyterian ministers to settle in Tennessee were Samuel Doak, Hezekiah Balch, and Gideon Blackburn. Doak had established the first school in Tennessee, which in 1795 became Washington College. William Birney contended that Doak, a slaveholder by inheritance, held strong anti-slavery convictions and eventually emancipated his slaves; while the contemporary evidence for this is lacking, it is probably a reliable tradition.[1] If such was the case it illumines the background of other anti-slavery Presbyterians, for many of them were his students.

Like Doak, Balch was involved in pioneer education in Tennessee, being founder and president of Greenville College. Despite much controversy concerning his theological views, his college prospered and had a hundred students the second year it was open.[2] Balch, like Doak, possessed slaves. "He wished to do his duty to them. But the greater number were taken from him for family debts. The rest he

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[1]William Birney, James G. Birney and His Times: The Genesis of the Republican Party with Some Account of Abolition Movements in the South before 1828. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890), pp. 74-76. Birney says that "Though he had been for many years opposed to slavery, he did not take the step of emancipating his own slaves until about 1818. Eleven of his freedmen removed to Brown County, Ohio....," p. 75. Finnie cites Doak's will as indicating he still had slaves at his death in 1830, but concludes that the scanty evidence points to a strong anti-slavery position. He rightly criticises Birney's claim that Doak was the leading Presbyterian abolitionist in Tennessee. Finnie, op. cit., p. 248. On Doak see DAB, Vol. 5, pp. 332-333; Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 392-397; J. W. Bachman, "Samuel Doak and his Successors," Pioneer Presbyterianism in Tennessee: Addresses delivered at the Tennessee Exposition on Presbyterian Day, October 28, 1897. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1898), pp. 39-51.

[2]Posey, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

liberated."[1] The third individual we have mentioned, Gideon Blackburn, also possessed slaves he later liberated. The biographical note in reference to his slaveholding in Sprague's Annals is worth quoting, as it gives some insight into the problems faced by anyone considering the liberation of his slaves:

> In regard to the temporal and spiritual welfare of his domestics, he always manifested a deep concern. One of them who had served him very faithfully for several years, he emancipated, when he was about thirty-five years of age, giving him a handsome outfit towards housekeeping. The others, some seven or eight in number, he emancipated one after another, until all were freed with two exceptions. These were very wicked, and were judged by him unfit or unworthy to enjoy their freedom, and being an annoyance in his family he sold them. The sale of these slaves, it is believed, he ever regretted, notwithstanding their viciousness and unworthiness; for he was always opposed to slavery, and ever gave his countenance and example, with those two exceptions, to the cause of emancipation. Those whom he liberated from bondage, with the exception of the first, were all sent to Liberia in Africa--the only place, as he judged, where the coloured man can enjoy true and substantial freedom.[2]

The influence of such men was undoubtedly great. Blackburn had been a student of Samuel Doak before Doak's academy became a college, and it is probable that Doak influenced Blackburn's convictions on slavery. John Rankin was also a student of Doak's; he was active in the Tennessee Manumission Society in its early years, and was one of the few in the Society who actively advocated immediate abolition.[3] Another Presbyterian minister who was active in the Society and likewise held immediatist views was Jesse Lockhart; he also had been trained under Doak, and, like Rankin, he moved to Ohio, where he became active in

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[1]Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 318.

[2]Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 51. This sketch of Blackburn can also be found in the Presbyterian Quarterly Review, Vol. 1 (1853), pp. 549ff.

[3]Martin, op. cit., p. 266. Filler says that Rankin was of major importance in helping build the Society, along with several members of the Society of Friends. Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 17.

abolition causes.[1] Doak's influence was also evident in the life of Dr. David Nelson, who had studied at Washington College. Nelson became a doctor, but relinquished a prosperous practice to become a minister in Tennessee in 1825. Six months after his ordination he freed his slaves.[2] A few years later he founded Marion College in Missouri which became noted for its abolitionist sentiments; Nelson was forced to flee for his life on one occasion, and settled in Illinois.[3]

Various other anti-slavery Presbyterians in Tennessee are worthy of mention. Balch's successor as president of Greenville College was Charles Coffin, a native of New England. His position on slavery is uncertain, although it is known that he never owned a slave, preferring hired servants instead.[4] Judge Seth J. W. Lucky became active in the anti-slavery cause in Tennessee; he was Balch's adopted son.[5] Samuel McCulloch Williamson studied under Blackburn after the latter had become president of Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, and later returned to Tennessee as a pastor. Like Blackburn, he developed anti-slavery convictions but found them difficult to practice.

> A slave holder by inheritance, at one time he had serious doubts as to the propriety of the relation....This led him to take measures for the emancipation of his slaves; and, for this purpose, he taught them all to read, so far as they were capable of being taught, furnished each one

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[1]Martin, op. cit., p. 216.

[2]Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 679; Finnie, op. cit., p. 243.

[3]Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 686. Both Blackburn and Nelson worked with James G. Birney in Kentucky in anti-slavery work; later both men were active in the formation of anti-slavery societies in Illinois. E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 338. A useful sketch, particularly of Nelson's later work, is in DAB, Vol. 13, pp. 414-415.

[4]Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 250. Indirect indications of his position include a strong friendship with David Nelson, and the fact that he was also pastor for a time of the Presbyterian Church in Rogersville, Tennessee, where much anti-slavery sentiment was in evidence. We have found no direct connection between Coffin and the noted Quaker abolitionist Coffin family.

[5]Patterson, op. cit., p. 143; Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 311.

> with a copy of the Word of God, and started to one of the new free States to purchase land where they might earn an honest livelihood. But, after a thorough examination into the condition and privileges of the free blacks, he returned home with a saddened heart, determined to discharge his duty faithfully to them whilst under his care, until the way should be clear for sending them to Liberia. This design was frustrated.[1]

Other names of Tennessee Presbyterians also can be identified with anti-slavery sentiments. John Blair, a member of the House of Representatives for twelve years from East Tennessee, was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and was convinced of the evil of slavery; he is said to have offered to free his slaves by giving them to David Nelson for disposal.[2] Isaac Anderson, the founder and president of the Southern and Western Theological Seminary in Maryville (also known as Maryville College), was "strongly opposed to slavery" and urged its abolition.[3] Part of his education had been received under Gideon Blackburn.[4] As we shall note later, Maryville College contained a number of students of abolitionist sentiment at least as late as 1837.[5]

Two other names are of interest, not only because of their association with anti-slavery forces, but because of their later defense of the institution of slavery. Dr. Philip Lindsley, president of the University of Nashville and probably the leading educator in Tennessee, had espoused anti-slavery convictions while at Princeton, and continued to advocate them after moving to Tennessee in 1825.[6]

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[1] Sprague, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 767.

[2] Patterson, op. cit., p. 143.

[3] Ralph W. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 80.

[4] Ibid., p. 75.

[5] Infra, p.

[6] Patterson, op. cit., pp. 182-183. Patterson fails to note the change in Lindsley's sentiments at a later date. It is of interest that Lindsley was educated under Robert Findley and later was a close friend of Findley's; Findley was founder of the American Colonization Society. See

Frederick A. Ross, who would later lead the Southern New School in the formation of a separate denomination because of the slavery issue, had inherited a fortune estimated at half a million dollars, including numerous slaves.[1] He had been a student at Samuel Doak's Washington College, and later sent a number of his slaves to Liberia.[2] He was also associated with David Nelson and another minister, James Gallaher, in the publication of the Calvinistic Magazine (First Series), which, although almost exclusively devoted to doctrinal issues, gave occasional expression to anti-slavery views.[3]

One other fact should be noted in this examination of anti-slavery sentiment in Tennessee during this period. Not only is it possible to attribute such views to most of the leading men in the Synod, it is equally impossible to find any indication of pro-slavery

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Sprague, op cit., Vol. 4, pp. 465-472 and DAB, Vol. 11, pp. 279-280, for summaries of his life.

[1]Tommy Rogers, "Dr. Frederick A. Ross and the Presbyterian Defense of Slavery," Journal of Presbyterian History, June, 1967, p. 114. See also Tommy Rogers, "Frederick A. Ross: Huntsville's Belligerant Clergyman," Alabama Review, January, 1969, pp. 53-55, for details of the early part of his life.

[2]Rogers does not mention Ross' liberation of his slaves. Early Fox (op. cit.,p. 214) indicates he sent twenty-one to Liberia in 1835. Confirmation of this is given in a letter from a resident of Greenville, Tennessee, to Dr. Thomas Chalmers, enclosing a copy of a pamphlet by Ross: "Mr. Ross is a Virginian, the son of a Scotsman, who at his death left his son a well educated gay young man, with what in this country, would be called a large estate, in landed property and slaves. In fashionable amusement, and trifling, he spent the first few years of his majority when...the Truth was brought home to his soul by means of some of your writings. This resolution being formed he studied for the ministry--rendered himself comparatively poor by setting his slaves free, but has ever since by his talent and piety, been a man of influence in our western church." Catherine N. Melville to Thomas Chalmers, MS letter, May 18, 1847. Thomas Chalmers Papers, New College Library, Edinburgh, Scotland. The letter, however, was never read by Chalmers, who died the end of May. For Ross' later views see Infra, p. 336. Patterson (op. cit., pp. 144-146) curiously misunderstands the sarcasm of Ross' later statements on slavery and incorrectly uses them to illustrate his earlier anti-slavery position.

[3]See Infra, pp. 97-98.

views among others in the Synod. Tennessee, therefore, was the one area in the entire Southern Church where anti-slavery forces were in control.

Unfortunately, very little specific information can be gleaned on Presbyterians and slavery in the other synods of the Old Southwest; this is due in large measure to the very scant number of Presbyterians in those areas during this period. Some anti-slavery sentiment is detectable in northern Alabama. Hugh Barr, a Presbyterian missionary in the area had radical anti-slavery convictions which eventually forced him to leave the State in 1835.[1] On the other hand, William Allan, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama, was a slaveholder who apparently had no particular scruples about the institution.[2] In the Mississippi-Louisiana area Rev. James Smylie was a slaveholder who early took a pro-slavery position; he contended, however, that a major motivation for defending slavery was the fact that most Christians in his area had suspicions that the institution was sinful.[3] Outside Tennessee there was apparently no organized anti-slavery effort, nor were colonization societies formed during this period.

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[1]Finnie, op. cit., p. 189.

[2]Allan is best known for a famous visit with Theodore Weld, who stayed with Allan in 1832. It was then Allan introduced Weld to James Birney, a member of Allan's congregation; the relationship between Weld and Birney was to become an important factor in the American anti-slavery movement. Two of Allan's sons attended Lane Seminary in Ohio and were converted to the abolitionist cause. Weld, at the time of his visit to Huntsville, still favored colonization as a means of abolishing slavery. It should be noted in assessing the attitude of Allan that he apparently was not hostile to Weld's work and vision, although he never freed his own slaves. William Birney, op. cit., pp. 105-110; Betty Fladeland, James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1955), pp. 52-54.

[3]See our discussion of Smylie, Infra, pp. 191-195. Note especially the quotation on p. 191.

REACTIONS TO SLAVERY

As we have seen, there was general agreement among thoughtful Southern Presbyterians as to the evil of slavery. The problem, however, was the exact way in which the evil was to be eliminated. In general, there were three responses among those Presbyterians who sought to deal with the matter: emigration to a free state, African colonization, and silent dissent.

Emigration to a free state was not, in reality, anything other than a personal solution to the problem of slavery. It in no way dealt immediately with the problem, although it could be argued that the example of such individuals had some effect. It was the solution especially of those who held a strong, uncompromising position on slavery, and in many cases migration to a free state was not so much by choice as by expediency or necessity.

The best known examples of those Presbyterians who migrated from the South are those who became leaders in the abolition movement. The case of George Bourne has been noted previously;[1] better known was the Alabama Presbyterian layman, James G. Birney. Birney had planned to settle in Illinois, but family problems made him return to his old home in Kentucky in 1832, where he thought he could carry out his anti-slavery activities in the more liberal atmosphere of a border state.

> Two years and a half ago, while residing in the State of Alabama, my mind became greatly aroused to the sin of slave-holding. This, aided by the malignant influence that I saw slavery exerting upon my children, determined me to visit Illinois for the purpose of liberating the few slaves that I had.[2]

As is well known, Birney was forced to leave Kentucky in 1835.

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[1] Supra, p.p. 61-67.

[2] James G. Birney to Gerrit Smith, November 27, 1833. In William Birney, James G. Birney and His Times, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890), p. 130.

Rev. John Rankin left Tennessee because of slavery, and settled in Ohio, where he was one of many Presbyterian clergymen who made it a hotbed of anti-slavery sentiment in the Church. He recounts the decision briefly: "Being opposed to slavery, I determined to leave my native state, and go to Ohio because it was a free state. My friends were all opposed to my leaving...."[1] Rankin was joined in Ohio by a trio of men from South Carolina Presbytery: John Gilliland, Robert Wilson, and William Williamson. The minutes of their presbytery give no indication of their reasons for their leaving, but Wilson's reasons are indicated in a letter to Williamson, in which he affirmed that "the opening of the slave trade in this State has led me to think of moving as soon as possible," and suggested that he and Williamson return from the General Assembly by way of Ohio to determine its suitability for settlement.[2] Gilliland, Wilson, and Williamson left the Presbytery in 1805, and settled in Ohio.[3]

One of the best examples of a Presbyterian who migrated to a free state was J. D. Paxton, of Virginia. Paxton, more than virtually any other migrant, has given us a full account of the steps which led to his decision. He was pastor of a church in Prince Edward County which owned a number of slaves who were hired out in order to provide income for the pastor's salary.

On moving to Prince Edward and going to housekeeping,

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[1]John Rankin, Autobiography, p. 27, MS, Duke University. This manuscript autobiography concentrates on Rankin's later activities, and is of great interest to the student of the American abolition movement.

[2]Robert Wilson to William Williamson, March 9, 1804. MS letter, Williamson Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society.

[3]Minutes of the Second Presbytery of South Carolina, (April 3, 1805), Vol. 1, p. 87. MS, Montreat.

Sprague says Gilliland likewise left because of differences over slavery with his congregation. Op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 138. Wilson became pastor of the church in Chillicothe, Ohio, and was later president of the University of Ohio.

> my wife's father, who was a slaveholder, gave and sent to her a family of house-servants, seven or eight in number, most of them small. This, with the discussions about colonization, the case of the slaves owned by the congregation, and the deliverance of the [1818]7 General Assembly, turned my thoughts to the subject.[1]

Paxton soon came to the conclusion that slavery was wrong, and, after providing some education for his slaves, he freed them and sent them to Liberia in 1826. His congregation disapproved of this, and he replied in a series of articles in the Richmond Family Visitor.[2] These unfortunately appeared at the time of a murder in his neighborhood of a white woman by a slave, and some suggested that his articles might have influenced the murderer. He discussed the matter fully with the members of his session, who agreed that the feelings of the congregation were such that Paxton would be wise to submit his resignation. He left Virginia, and eventually had a notable career as a foreign missionary.

The migration of Presbyterian laymen is harder to trace,

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[1]Paxton, op. cit., p. 74. A further reason not stated by Paxton may have been the Bourne trial; Paxton was the first witness called to testify against Bourne in the 1815 trial.

Shortly after this Paxton wrote a series of sixteen letters to his former congregation, in which he defended the right of ministers to speak against slavery, examined in detail the teaching of Scripture concerning slavery, and urged emancipation of all slaves. Several years later, after Paxton had moved to Kentucky, the letters were published. He forecasted that the problem of slavery, unless solved immediately, would lead to violence and the disruption of the Union. "There has but seldom, in the history of the world, been a wider departure, by a nation, from their own avowed principles, or a more glaring deviation from the rule of doing as they would be done by. What will be our doom, if we are recompensed according to our works? This, without repentance and amendment, is what both Scripture and history lead us to expect.... A man must be ignorant, or inattentive, or infatuated, not to see the natural means of retribution so gathering in the south, that, instead of a miracle being needful to punish us, nothing but a miracle can prevent it, unless we change our course." J. D. Paxton, Letters on Slavery: Addressed to the Cumberland Congregation, Virginia. (Lexington, Kentucky: Abraham T. Skillman, 1833), pp. 185-186.

[2]We have not had access to copies of these articles, but they presumably advocated some type of emancipation and stated that slavery was morally wrong.

although undoubtedly there were many instances. One example is provided by a doctor who was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Camden, South Carolina. His wife's correspondence with her cousin in Philadelphia gives some insight into the various motives that led to migration:

> Our Village and neighbourhood has been in great confusion for two days past owing to the fear of an insurrection of the Blacks and nothing but the interposition of that Being to whom we are indebted for all our mercies has saved us from destruction....I think it is time for us to leave a Country that we cannot go to bed in in safety.[1]

Several weeks later the decision to leave seems to have become firmer:

> The Doctor and myself have determined upon going to the North to live if we are preserved untill next Spring. We have taken such a disgust to Slavery that we cannot feel satisfied here although we are sensible it will be much against our interest to remove.[2]

Apparently they carried out their plan, for later letters are preserved addressed to them in Philadelphia.

The migration of many from the South because of slavery had an unfortunate effect on the Southern Church. Many of them were capable men, and were usually those who saw most clearly the moral issues involved in slaveholding. Their removal left the argument in the hands of those who were either less capable or more timid. It would be a mistake, however, to say that only pro-slavery men were left after the migration of such men, for there were many in the South who still held anti-slavery feelings, but who, for various reasons, did not migrate. In many cases it was because of the conviction that

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[1]Rachel Blanding to Hannah Lewis, July 4, 1816, MS letter, Blanding Papers, University of South Carolina. The letter was published in abridged form in the New York Evening Post, July 18, 1816, and is quoted from this source by Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: International Publishers, reprinted 1963), p. 257.

[2]Rachel Blanding to Hannah Lewis, July 25, 1816. MS letter, Blanding Papers, University of South Carolina.

some form of emancipation would be instituted which would solve the problem, and, when the American Colonization Society was formed in 1817, many Presbyterians in the South felt that the answer had come at last.

Colonization actually had been proposed, at least informally, by Southern Presbyterians before the idea had been formulated by Robert Finley, the New Jersey Presbyterian to whom credit is given for the organization of the American Colonization Society. James Hoge had suggested the possibilities in a conversation with Conrad Speece:

> In the month of February 1814 I was on my journey from my Father's residence in Virginia to my home in the West. On the way I called on the Rev. Conrad Speece, then Pastor of the Augusta Church near Stauton. We had much conversation, and among other things on my having fixed my residence in a free State. I gave as one reason my opposition to slavery. This produced some discussion of that Institution, and, as usual in that day, Dr. S. proposed the question---what should be done with the slaves if they were emancipated? I answered---send them back to Africa, if they cannot be retained among us as free laborers. The proposal took hold in his mind....I was afterwards informed that Dr. Speece did write [on colonization], and that his articles were published in a weekly paper printed in Richmond....[1]

Whatever the reaction to this might have been, Southern Presbyterians greeted the establishment of the American Colonization Society with general enthusiasm.

Several synods took notice of the American Colonization Society and commended it to their churches. The Synod of Virginia gave the project a warm recommendation:

> Whereas the Synod of Virginia are informed of the existence in our country of an association of intel-

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[1] James Hoge to William S. Plumer, March 10, 1833. MS letter, Hoge Papers, Montreat. We have not had access to Speece's articles. Hoge acknowledged that he had read of the idea somewhere. A later Southern Presbyterian paper quoted an 1811 letter of Thomas Jefferson urging colonization. Family Visitor, quoted by Missionary, November 24, 1823.

> ligent & patriotick citizens, under the title of the "American Colonization Society" the object of which is to send out to the coasts of Africa such free persons of colour in the United States as may be willing to go, & when there is reason to hope that this enterprize, conducted with proper discretion will produce the happiest effects, particularly in aiding to communicate the glad tidings of the gospel to an interesting quarter of the globe, & to meliorate the condition of a degraded portion of our population, while it promises the means of alleviating evils which our own country has reason to deplore, Resolved unanimously that the Synod of Virginia recommend to all the members of the churches & congregations under their care to aid the design of the said society according to opportunity & ability, by their prayers to Almighty God for its success.[1]

Four years later the Synod again took notice of the Society:

> Resolved, that the Synod continue to regard the object of the American Colonization Society with cordial approbation; and believing that it will produce, under the blessing of Divine Providence, the most important benefits to their country and to the world, do earnestly recommend it to the prayers and contributions of the churches under their care.[2]

Two years later the Synod was able to report that "an increasing interest is taken in the success of the American Colonization Society."[3]

Similar resolutions came from the Synod of North Carolina, which took notice of the Society a full year before the Synod of Virginia:

> Resolved, that a letter be addressed, by this Synod, to the President of the Colonization Society, expressive of their approbation of the formation & views of said

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, Vol. 4, pp. 252-253, (October, 1819), MS.

[2] Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 48-49 (October, 1823). It is of interest that the first and most important colonization society in Virginia (The Richmond and Manchester Colonization Society) was organized less than two weeks after this resolution was passed; it is possible that the Synod was aware of the proposed organization. Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 333. The American Colonization Society was also almost bankrupt at the time, having had total receipts of approximately $800.00 in 1822; the precarious state of the Society may also have influenced the Synod in passing the resolution at this time. Staudenraus, op. cit., p. 68.

[3] Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 105 (October, 1825).

> Society; & of their willingness to co-operate with them, in the laudable object of their undertaking.[1]

The next year the Synod took note of the advance of the Society:

> The committee appointed at our last Sessions, to draft & transmit a letter to The Honourable President of the Colonization Society, expressive of this Synod's approbation of the formation & views of said Society &c, reported, that they had received a letter in reply, containing the most pleasing evidence, that this Synods communication had met with the most welcome reception. At the same time, information was also received of the recent formation of societies, at Raleigh, at Chapel Hill, & at Fayetteville, auxiliary to the principal society organized at the city of Washington.[2]

In 1823 the Synod again passed a long resolution, urging all members in the bounds of the Synod to become familiar with the Society's goals and achievements, and requesting that every member of Synod preach on colonization at least once in the coming year.[3] The Synod's Narrative of the State of Religion for 1826 was optimistic of the course of the Society:

> Societies, auxiliary to the American Colonization Society continue to receive patronage from the many sections of our church; & the grand scheme of benevolence, which that society is continually bringing befor them, is receiving the increased attention of the public.[4]

Three years later, however, the Synod admitted that the scheme was floundering:

> "Some interest is felt, by a portion of our population in the object, plans, and operations of the American Colonization Society; yet nothing worth noticing has been effected."[5]

This candid statement indicates something of the course the colonization movement followed in the South. At first colonization

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, Vol. 1, p. 42 (1818), MS, Montreat.

[2] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 55.

[3] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 267-268.

[4] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 293-294.

[5] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 44-45 (November, 1829).

was seen as a hopeful scheme for solving a hitherto unsolvable problem; as time went on, the movement lost momentum.

Southern Presbyterians provided some of the firmest support for the colonization movement during this earliest period. This is seen partially in the financial support they gave to the American Colonization Society. A careful survey of available financial records of the Society shows wide support from Presbyterians in the South, mainly in Virginia and North Carolina.[1] Various Presbyterians also were directly active in the affairs of colonization societies. John McPhail, a Presbyterian elder, was the ACS's agent in Norfolk, Virginia; most of the emigrant ships left from Norfolk, and McPhail's responsibilities included the chartering of ships and organization of expeditions.[2] In Richmond another Presbyterian elder, David I. Burr, was a strong backer of the colonization cause, and for years was the secretary of the Virginia Colonization Society.[3] Richmond lawyer William Maxwell (biographer of John Holt Rice) was likewise active, and was a vice-president of the Richmond and Manchester Society along with such leading Virginians as James Monroe and James Madison.[4] The noted Presbyterian clergyman, G. A. Baxter, was responsible for a petition from the Rockbridge Colonization Society to the Virginia General Assembly request-

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[1]Lists of donors are found in issues of the monthly African Repository, the official periodical of the ACS. The lists include many Presbyterian ministers in the South, as well as prominent laymen. It was customary to take collections on the Sunday nearest July 4 for the colonization cause; the donation lists indicate that the custom, while not widespread in any section of the country, was at least followed with some frequency, especially by larger churches in the South. The African Repository commenced publication in 1820.

[2]Staudenraus, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

[3]Minutes of the Virginia Colonization Society, MS, Virginia Colonization Society Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

[4]Staudenraus, op. cit., p. 107.

ing financial backing for colonization.[1] In North Carolina the two vice-presidents of the North Carolina Colonization Society were both leading Presbyterian ministers, Dr. William McPheeters and Dr. Joseph Caldwell.[2] Dr. Conrad Speece was likewise an officer in the Augusta County (Virginia) Auxiliary Society.[3] Dr. Philip Lindsley, the distinguished president of the University of Nashville, was an officer in the Tennessee State Colonization Society and took an interest in the affairs of the parent Society.[4] Students at Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia organized a colonization society in 1825.[5]

Presbyterian support for the colonization cause was shown in a more direct way, through the emancipation of slaves they owned. Information in this period is undependable, but the names of some Southern Presbyterians can be discerned.[6] Rev. J. D. Paxton freed a family of slaves given to his wife.[7] Rev. Samuel Davies Hoge freed one before moving to Ohio, and Rev. Thomas P. Hunt, of Virginia, sent eighteen slaves to Liberia in 1829.[8] Presbyterian periodicals took

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[1] Visitor and Telegraph, August 30, 1828.

[2] African Repository, January, 1828. Vol. 3, No. 11. McPheeters was pastor of the church in Raleigh and head of an academy in Raleigh; Caldwell was president of the University of North Carolina.

[3] Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 365.

[4] LeRoy J. Halsey, ed. The Works of Philip Lindsley, Vol. 3, pp. 578-579; Hereafter referred to as Lindsley, Works. See also Philip Lindsley to Ralph Gurley, August 29, 1831, MS letter, American Colonization Society Papers, Library of Congress.

[5] Family Visitor, July 23, 1825. Literary and Evangelical Magazine, Vol. 8 (1825), p. 445. The file of the African Repository now in the Union Theological Seminary library in Richmond came from the Hampden-Sidney reading room, according to notations on the covers.

[6] A very sketchy list will be found in Early L. Fox, op. cit., pp. 212-215. It covers only the years 1825-1835.

[7] Paxton, op. cit., p. 74; see supra, pp. 86-87.

[8] Fox, op. cit., p. 212.

occasional notice of the freeing of slaves by Presbyterians, although the persons involved were not identified by name.[1]

Southern Presbyterian periodicals gave strong support to the colonization cause also. John Holt Rice gave the American Colonization Society frequent notice; major reports on the activities of the American Colonization Society and various auxiliaries occurred at least three times a year between 1823 and 1826.[2] The North Carolina Telegraph, published in Fayetteville by Rev. Colin McIver during 1826, included several reports on Liberia,[3] as did its successor, the Evangelical Museum, published during 1828.[4] The Richmond Family Visitor (edited by Nathan Pollard, a Presbyterian layman) carried reports on the colonization cause, including a major article urging colonization as a means of evangelizing Africa.[5] Its successor, the Visitor and Telegraph, continued such backing, including a letter from Liberia addressed to the free blacks of Virginia urging them to migrate,[6] and an editorial stating that colonization should be backed as a means of showing patriotism.[7] In the Tennessee area the Calvinistic Magazine,

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[1] Family Visitor, January 7, 1826; Visitor and Telegraph, September 27, 1828.

[2] The Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 6, pp. 545-556; 601-611; 665-667; Vol. 7, pp. 47, 166-168; 447-448; Vol. 8, pp. 30-35, 43-45, 102-103, 443-445, 668-669; Vol. 9, pp. 51-56, 333-336.

[3] North Carolina Telegraph, July 28, 1826; October 27, 1826.

[4] Evangelical Museum, Vol. 1, pp. 240, 288. The North Carolina Telegraph was issued weekly; the Evangelical Museum was monthly.

[5] Family Visitor, March 4, 1826.

[6] Visitor and Telegraph, January 5, 1828.

[7] Ibid., November 24, 1827. The editor noted the "noble and encouraging example of liberality" of a citizen of Richmond who had just released 23 slaves to be sent to Liberia under the auspices of the ACS, and was encouraged at increased interest in the work of the Society." Many are beginning to see that their cause is the cause of patriotism--destined in its progress to remove from our country the complicated evils resulting from the existence of those who, though free, can not be citizens--

although generally confining itself to doctrinal subjects, reprinted sermons on colonization which dealt in systematic fashion with the subject.[1]

The real question, however, in dealing with colonization and Southern Presbyterians in this early period is the relation between colonization and emancipation. Was colonization a means whereby emancipation would be accomplished, or were there other motives involved which had little or nothing to do with emancipation? The question becomes vital when it is realized that the American Colonization Society refused to make emancipation one of its goals, although many looked to colonization as the means by which emancipation could be accomplished.[2] For others, however, colonization was simply a means of ridding the nation of the free blacks, both in the North and the South. How did Southern Presbyterians view the goals of colonization?

It will be noticed that our previous discussions of Southern

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that it is the cause too of heavenlike benevolence--that its success will extend the humanizing influence of the arts of civilized life, and disseminate the blessed light and power of the gospel among thousands and millions of the degraded sons of Africa."

[1] Calvinistic Magazine, First Series, Vol. 1, pp. 234-242; Vol. 3, p. 256; Vol. 4, pp. 257-269.

[2] See, for example, the resolutions passed by the Society in 1826, which allowed ample room for individual interpretation: "Resolved, That the Society disclaims, in the most unqualified terms, the designs attributed to it, of interfering, on the one hand, with the legal rights and obligations of slavery, and on the other, of perpetuating its existence within the limits of the country. 2. Resolved, That its only object is, what has been at all times avowed, the removal to the Coast of Africa, with their own consent, of such people of colour within the United States, as are already free, and of such others as the humanity of individuals, and the laws of the different States, may hereafter liberate." Reprinted in Literary and Evangelical Magazine, Vol. 9 (1826), p. 52. This ambiguity was to plague the Society throughout its life; those favoring emancipation came to suspect the goals of the Society, especially after the attacks of Garrison and others in the 1830's, while Southern slaveholders often suspected the Society of having abolitionist tendencies.

Presbyterians and colonization have omitted any reference to Presbyterians in South Carolina and Georgia. The reason is twofold. First, Presbyterians in this area (along with the population of the lower South Atlantic states generally) showed comparatively little interest in colonization. The second reason is more important for our present discussion, however: Presbyterians in that area considered colonization solely as a means of removing free blacks, and never as a means of effecting emancipation. By the time that colonization became prominent the period of transition had set in, and one of the most definite signs that the attitude of Presbyterians in that area was changing was their failure to see colonization as a means of emancipation.[1]

The situation in Virginia and North Carolina is somewhat different; there Presbyterians in the early period tended to look on colonization as a means of bringing about the eventual end of slavery. This is certainly seen in the examples we have noted of Presbyterians who sent their slaves to Liberia; it is likewise evident in the position of men like Speece and Rice who were known to favor eventual emancipation. It is most obvious, however, in the attitude of the religious press, and, of the various periodicals and newspapers published in Virginia and North Carolina, it is most clearly seen in the one publication which tended to publish essays on questions of public interest, John Holt Rice's Evangelical and Literary Magazine.

In an important essay Rice reviewed the annual reports of the American Colonization Society from 1818 through 1823. While recounting the history of the movement from its inception, Rice also took the occasion to express again his disapproval of slavery. Further,

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[1]It is worth noting that the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, unlike other synods, took no notice of the colonization movement. For a discussion of the attitude toward colonization in these areas see our Part Two, Chapter One.

in the strongest possible terms Rice stated his belief that slavery must be eradicated before it eradicated American society. Rice raised the spectre of the horrors that might be anticipated if slavery were not brought to an end:

> Plots! and insurrections! These are words of terror, but their terribleness is no argument against the truth of what we say. If things go on as they are, words more terrible than these must be "familiar on our mouthes." For not withstanding all that may be done to keep the slaves in ignorance, they are learning, and will continue to learn....Slaves are never slow in learning that they are fettered, and that freedom is the birthright of humanity. Our slaves will not always be ignorant--and when that righteous Providence, which never wants instruments to accomplish its designs, whether of mercy, or of vengence, shall raise up a Touissaint, or a Spartacus, on an African Tecumseh, his fellow slaves will flock around his standard, and we shall witness scenes--which history describes, but from the thought of which the imagination revolts.[1]

Rice went on to advocate colonization as the means whereby emancipation could take place safely:

> What other scheme, then, for the improvement of the blacks is there before the public? What other efforts are we exhorted to make?....If then there is any hope of extensive good for these two millions of beings, it must be found in the plans proposed by the American Colonization Society.[2]

A similar stance was taken by the Calvinistic Magazine, published in Rogersville, Tennessee. In a long essay on colonization the goal of sending free blacks to Africa was admitted. However, the author argued that one of the most powerful barriers to emancipation was the degraded state of the free black population; no benevolent person would want to free his slaves, only to have them decline into

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[1] Evangelical and Literary Magazine, Vol. 6, p. 602. "Review of the Reports of the American Colonization Society" (1823). Clement Eaton has suggested that freedom of expression on slavery in Virginia was stifled during the period from 1800 to 1830, until the debate in the Virginia General Assembly in 1831. The Freedom of Thought Struggle in the Old South, pp. 167-168. Rice's statements certainly are a notable exception to this.

[2] Ibid., pp. 605, 606.

the moral and legal limbo that characterized the free black, especially in the South. However, if a way were clear for offering the free black the opportunity of advancement and legal standing, then many would feel free to liberate their slaves.

> It has long been a matter of just regret among the discerning and well informed, that they cannot free their slaves without adding to their wretchedness; that so many as they manumit and retain here, so many materials they turn loose on the community to be manufactured into every form of indolence, degradation, and vice....The only feasible remedy for the evil appears to be colonization.[1]

In similar fashion the editor, reviewing the events of the past year (1827), noted the connection between colonization and emancipation in the following terms:

> In our own country, though the cause of emancipation is gaining ground, and Liberia is prosperous, and obtains favor with the people; still, two millions of people are held in bondage by republican freemen; and their cry during another whole year of oppression has gone up to heaven against us.[2]

Thus the goal of eventual emancipation was seen as a legitimate part of the colonization movement. To be sure, many Southern Presbyterians probably supported the movement with the sole design of ridding the nation of the free black population.[3] However, leading spokesmen within the Church went further than this; it is only later that a change in attitude can be detected and the concept of colonization as a means of emancipation is abandoned.

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[1] Calvinistic Magazine, First Series, "An Essay on the Fourth of July on the American Colonization Society" by Stephen Foster, Vol. 1, pp. 238, 239, (1827).

[2] Ibid., Vol. 2 (1828), p. 6.

[3] Thus many expressions concerning the colonization movement from this period are ambiguous concerning the relationship of the movement to emancipation. See, for example, the previously-quoted statement from the Richmond Family Visitor (supra, pp.94-95) in which the editor commended recent instances of emancipation, but then declared the goal of colonization as the removal of free blacks.

CONCLUSION

We have noted in this first part of our study the two topics of the Southern Presbyterian understanding and practice of the Church's relationship to society, and the Southern Presbyterian understanding of slavery. It remains for us to look briefly at the relationship between these two topics.

The view of thoughtful Southern Presbyterians concerning slavery was undoubtedly influenced by numerous cultural and economic factors; men do not always direct their lives by principles which have been logically and carefully scrutinized, nor do they necessarily act in strict accordance with the principles they do have. In spite of this, however, it is worth noting that Southern Presbyterian reactions to slavery in the early period follow logically from their understanding of the Church's relationship to society. This is seen particularly in two areas.

First, their view of the Church's relationship to society left them free to criticize the institution of slavery. In this early period slavery was not seen simply as a political problem; fundamental issues of morality were also involved. To some, also, the continued existence of slavery was a dangerous problem which eventually could lead to great social disorder. Whatever moral and pragmatic considerations were presented against slavery, the basic point is that the criticism of slavery was considered within the Church's sphere.

Second, their view of Church and society meant that they were not afraid to move toward some solution of the slavery problem. In this regard it is extremely important to see how their view of society governed their attempts at solutions. We have indicated that many Southern Presbyterians tended to be critical of slavery and looked forward to its eventual extinction. Why did they reject, then, schemes

for the immediate abolition of slavery? The basic reason was their commitment to a stable social order; they saw no means whereby both immediate emancipation and social stability could be achieved. Immediate emancipation would result in social chaos, since the uneducated slave population would be incapable of responsible living in a state of freedom. The example of the free black population in the North was ample proof to the average Southerner. It is in this light that we must view their initial enthusiasm for colonization; it was the one scheme which seemed to promise both emancipation and the avoidance of social disruption. Even the "solution" of silent dissent could be justified in this manner; if the sole alternative to silent dissent was social disruption, silence was the lesser of two evils.

In this early period, therefore, the Church's understanding of its relationship to society determined its understanding of slavery. One of the main features of the period of transition is the reversal of these. As the period of transition progressed in the various areas of the Southern Church, it became clear that the changed understanding of slavery determined the changed understanding of the Church's relationship to society. In short, in the early period social views tended to be governed by theology; during the period of transition, theology tended to be governed by social views. It is to this period of transition that we must now turn.

PART II. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

PART TWO: THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

INTRODUCTION

We have noted that Southern Presbyterians in the early period adhered to a view of the Church's relationship to society which allowed freedom for the Church to act as a critic of society. We have also noted that Southern Presbyterians exercised this freedom to some extent in connection with the institution of slavery.

In the period of transition a basic change took place in regard to both the theory and the practice of the Church's relationship to Southern society. Under a variety of pressures the Southern Presbyterian view of slavery underwent a transition, the essence of which was the end of anti-slavery thought and the beginning of a virtually unanimous pro-slavery position. This transition in the view of slavery then became the major factor in the transition toward a different view of the Church's relationship to society, the essence of which was an emphasis on the separateness of the Church and a consequent tendency to deny the responsibility of the Church to act as a critic of society.

The period of transition exhibited several characteristics which should be kept in mind. In the first place, it was a "period" of time; the transition took years to develop, and during the entire period some diversity of thought could still be found. It was only in the final stages of the period that diversity ceased.

The period of transition, therefore, has been divided into three sections, with the exception of our study of the Old Southwest, where the transition period was less easily divided. First, in each area there was an initial impulse toward transition--an event (or series

of events) which caused some degree of reexamination of the Church's relationship to Southern culture, especially its relationship to slavery. Second, in each area there was an event (or events) which created a movement toward consensus. Finally, there was an event--in this case, common to every section of the Southern Church--which marked the end of diversity and controversy.

In the second place, the transition took place in different ways in different areas. This was true chronologically, so that the dating of the period of transition was different for each of the areas. It was likewise true in regard to causes; transition took place in response to different impulses in different areas. Finally, it was true in regard to the extent of transition; while there came to be virtual unanimity among Southern Presbyterians generally, the extent to which certain issues were seen as fundamental (or peripheral) differed according to the area.

For our study we have divided the Southern Church into three main units.

The first area consists of the territory covered by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. Since the two states formed one synod it was natural for them to consider themselves as a unit. Periodicals published in the Synod generally confined their circulation mainly to the bounds of the Synod, and the various Presbyteries likewise cooperated in the establishment of Columbia Theological Seminary.

The second consists of the area covered by the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina. While the Synod of North Carolina had its origin in the older Synod of the Carolinas, by the time of the period of transition it had come to be more closely tied with the Synod of Virginia. Thus, for example, the periodicals published in Richmond usually confined their circulation mainly to the two states. The two synods likewise cooperated in the control of Union Seminary.

The third area is what can broadly be called the Old Southwest, covering Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and the few churches in Texas and Arkansas. Here the unity is somewhat harder to detect. The Synod of Alabama, for example, had strong ties with the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia (having once been part of that Synod). The Synods in the Old Southwest never united to form a theological seminary, nor did any one periodical dominate the entire region. Nevertheless, there is good reason for considering them as a unit, in spite of diversity within the area. The Churches in the Old Southwest shared a common frontier background and had common problems and concerns, and on occasion worked together as a unit. When, for example, the Synod of Alabama conceived the project of purchasing a slave to train for the mission field in Africa, it looked to the other Southwestern synods for help rather than to the older synods in the Southeast. The few periodicals published in the area likewise saw themselves serving the entire Southwestern Church rather than their immediate area.

Our first chapter began with the period of transition in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, since transition began earlier there than anywhere else. The initial impulse toward transition in the Synod came from secular sources, especially the controversy concerning the Missouri Compromise in 1820. The movement toward consensus likewise was largely in response to secular events, especially the nullification controversy in the early 1830's and the growth of abolitionism in the North. The end of diversity, on the other hand, was closely connected with the events within the Church leading to the split of 1837-38, and after the meeting of the Old School General Assembly in 1839 the period of transition was at an end.

The second chapter examined the period of transition in Virginia and North Carolina. The initial impulse occurred later here, and was connected only secondarily with secular events; the primary

impulse came from the agitation of the slavery question by several Church judicatories in the Northwest which began in 1826. The movement toward consensus was less pronounced than in South Carolina and Georgia, and was mainly tied to the rise of abolitionism. The end of diversity closely paralleled the pattern in South Carolina and Georgia, being intimately related to ecclesiastical events in the Presbyterian Church leading to the 1837-38 split and ending after the 1839 General Assembly.

The Old Southwest was the last section to undergo transition. The initial impulse in this case came from the rise of abolitionist activities. Unlike the other two areas, the transition did not continue in as clearly defined stages. The agitation of slavery within the Church, however, was the main event that led to consensus, and here again the issue was settled after the 1839 Assembly.

In each of these three areas the main issue during the period was slavery. For this reason, each chapter will deal first with the transition in the attitude toward slavery. In line with our thesis that the shift of opinion on slavery largely caused a shift in the Church's understanding of its relationship to society, we shall then consider separately the question of this relationship, noting especially attitudes toward Southern sectionalism.

PART II. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

CHAPTER I. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND GEORGIA, 1820-1839

Slavery: The Initial Impulse

Slavery: The Movement Toward Consensus

Slavery: The End of Diversity

Summary

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND GEORGIA, 1820-1839

Chronologically the period of transition among Southern Presbyterians began first in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. In a real sense the transition was not as sharp as in other areas, because slavery was more deeply ingrained in the region and, after the removal of some of the most articulate critics of slavery to the North, comparatively little open anti-slavery sentiment remained. Unfortunately, by the time concern about slavery was becoming prominent elsewhere in the South pro-slavery sentiment in South Carolina and Georgia had solidified. Furthermore, by the time Presbyterian periodicals became established in the region the period of transition had already started.

SLAVERY: THE INITIAL IMPULSE

The years 1819 and 1820 saw the rise of a great debate in the United States over the question of slavery, in connection with the admission of Missouri as a state. By 1819 the United States consisted of twenty-two states, divided equally between slave and free. Political power in the House of Representatives had shifted toward the free states; for this reason the balance of power in the Senate was considered of crucial importance by the South. The details of the debate which led to the so-called Missouri Compromise are beyond our present concern, but two effects of the debate

are of importance. First, the debate led for the first time to widespread discussion of the question of slavery, including the assertion of many that slavery was a moral wrong which should be eliminated. Second, the debates led to an increased sectionalism in the South, including some fears that the Federal Union was at the point of dissolution.

The debates surrounding the Missouri Compromise had their effect on Southern Presbyterians; no where was this more clearly the case than in South Carolina and Georgia. In fact, all evidence points to the public concern over the Missouri debates as providing the initial impulse for the transition in attitudes toward slavery among Presbyterians in this region.

Evidence for this contention is largely inferential; unfortunately no Southern Presbyterian of the period has left us with direct statements on the causes of the change. About the change itself, however, there is little doubt. In discussing the religious instruction of the slave population the Missionary, published in Mt. Zion, Georgia, made the following statement:

> There are now in the states and territories belonging to the Union between one and two millions of SLAVES, who, in point of religion, may be ranked with the pagan world; and yet little or nothing, comparatively, is done for their salvation. With their political condition we have no wish to interfere, but barely remark, in reference to this subject, that the scheme of emancipation in all its forms in which it has been presented, appears to us to be wild and destructive. We find them upon our hands, and are bound to meliorate their condition as far as circumstances will permit, and especially are we bound to provide for their religious instruction.[1]

A year later (about the time of the discovery of the Denmark Vesey plot in Charleston) the same periodical reprinted two

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[1]Missionary, June 6, 1821.

letters of "A Carolina Planter" which defended the institution of slavery from the attacks of Northerners. He noted that great hostility existed in the nation between the North and the South.

> ...the origin of this evil, so wide in its extent and so pernicious in its effects, may be directly traced to the slavery existing in these southern states. Publick opinion and feeling at the north, are influenced by the most violent and obstinate prejudices, upon this subject, in part by false impressions and misrepresentations--in part by a sincere abhorrence of what are believed to be the enormous evils of the system --and in part, it is to be feared, by the envy of their neighbours enjoying a source of ease and affluence, from which themselves are excluded.[1]

He then went on to admit that some instances of cruelty did exist in slavery, but contended that an equal number of examples could be cited of New England businessmen who were cruel to their apprentices. However, the real issue was the charge of Northern Christians that slaveholding was a sin. Such a charge was unjustified; it may have been an evil to tear Africans away from their native land, but God has used it for good.

> And where, I would ask, is the scripture authority, for the severe denunciation, we so often hear against all owners of slaves? It does appear to me, that the precepts and examples in the Bible, upon the subject, are not in unison with the spirit and opinions of those who condemn, so severely and indiscriminately, all possessors of slaves....The present indications of Providence seem to me entirely contrary to the gloomy expectations of those who long predicted, that the accumulating evils of slavery must terminate in blood. In opposition to this...the evils and enormous abuses of slavery are decreasing, and there is a decided and visible approximation to a general enjoyment and diffusion of the blessings of the Gospel.

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[1]"A Carolina Planter", Missionary, July 15, 1822. The letters originally appeared in the Southern Intelligencer (formerly Southern Evangelical Intelligencer), published in Charleston under the editorship of B. M. Palmer and George Reid. The issues are apparently not extant. The letters were then reprinted in the Missionary, July 15 and August 5, 1822, published in Mt. Zion, Georgia, under the editorship of Benjamin Gildersleeve.

> To put a final end to all the crimes and sufferings and evils now attendant upon slavery, it is by no means necessary that the relation between master and servant should cease, or that the legal bonds of servitude should be broken.[1]

The letters are important for several reasons. In the first place, they show clearly the prevalence of pro-slavery sentiment among Southern Presbyterians in this region; from a passive critique or tacit acquiesence of slavery they have now come to a positive defense of the institution. Second, there is an appeal to Scripture as a justification of slavery; the argument is not carefully thought out, but the basic themes which would form later Scriptural apologetics of slavery are present.[2] Third, there is a frank acknowledgement of the evils of the slave system. Fourth, it is obvious the writer assumes that slavery will not be terminated in the foreseeable future; emancipation is not even a remote goal toward which Christians are to work. Fifth, it is significant that the letters appeared in both periodicals published by Presbyterians at the time in the South Carolina and Georgia region. This would indicate that the views expressed in the letter were generally accepted by Presbyterians in both South Carolina and Georgia.

The attitude toward slavery is also indicated in the relationship of Presbyterians in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia to the colonization movement. Almost from the first both the Southern Evangelical Intelligencer and the Missionary carried fairly full coverage of the activities of the American Colonization Society.

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[1] Ibid, August 5, 1822.

[2] It would thus rank as one of the earliest attempts to defend slavery from a Biblical standpoint in the South; the influential publication of Richard Furman, (Exposition of the Views of the Baptists Relative to the Colored Population of the U.S. in a Communication to the Governor of South Carolina) was not printed until 1823. For a survey of the influence on the Missouri debates on the development of the pro-slavery argument in the lower South see William S. Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), pp. 65-81.

A long letter from the ACS agent in Milledgeville, Georgia, was reprinted by the former paper, and his work was enthusiastically endorsed by the editor.[1] The latter paper gave similar coverage to the Society, and likewise urged its readers to support the cause.[2]

It is important to observe, however, that in no instance is colonization linked with emancipation. Unlike Presbyterians in other areas of the South, those in South Carolina and Georgia never conceived of colonization as a means of bringing about the eventual end of slavery. Instead, it was viewed as a philanthropic movement to allow free blacks to return to Africa. Thus, the letter from the ACS agent in Milledgeville mentioned above revealed that his work at the time centered around the colonization of a group of blacks who had been the cargo of a slaver captured off the coast of Georgia; the legislature of Georgia had offered them to the Society as potential emigrants. The Missionary frankly acknowledged that colonization would not significantly affect the black population:

> We will now admit...that the superflux of black population will not, by the colonization of Africa, be perceptibly diminished....the main object of colonization is not to rid ourselves of this superflux of black population. It is to repair the outrages, the wrongs, the indignities, that we and our ancestors have perpetrated on the Africans--it is to show, in the future records of American history, that, not withstanding our ancestors and some unprincipled wretches now in existence have been guilty of the crime of man-stealing; that they have made a traffick of

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[1]Southern Evangelical Intelligencer, June 26, 1819. The paper also gave extensive coverage of such activities as the ACS annual meetings, the embarkation of new emigrants to Liberia, and the course of the Liberian colony.

[2]See, for example, Missionary, April 13, 1821; July 4, 1821; October 22, 1821; May 20, 1822. The Charleston Observer, which succeeded the two papers in 1827 and was edited by Gildersleeve, took less notice of the colonization movement, although minor news notes were included from time to time. After the rise of abolitionism and other events in the early 1830's there was some renewal in interest in colonization by the paper; at no time, however, was the movement seen as anything other than a means of ridding the nation of the free black population.

> human blood, bones, and sinews,--still, by the philanthropick exertions of the present day, this very traffick redounds to the permanent blessing of the Africans.[1]

In short, colonization and emancipation were unrelated in the minds of Presbyterians in the lower South.

SLAVERY: THE MOVEMENT TOWARD CONSENSUS

Throughout the 1820's slavery was a live issue, especially in the lower South. Little comment about slavery occurs among Southern Presbyterians there after the Missouri debates until the early 1830's, when once again the South found itself assailed and increasingly alienated on the issue of slavery. The main event which moved Southern Presbyterians toward a new concensus on slavery in the lower South was the rise of abolitionism in the North and the consequent systematic criticism of the South. In South Carolina this occurred at the same time as the debate over nullification, and, while (as we shall see) Southern Presbyterians generally opposed nullification and took a national stance, they could not escape completely the feeling of alienation which came with that controversy. The main result of the abolitionist controversy for Southern Presbyterians in South Carolina and Georgia was to turn them toward an aggressive defense of the institution of slavery.

A hint of the coming defensiveness on slavery occurred as early as 1830. A letter in the Charleston Observer took note of

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[1] Missionary, April 20, 1821. The quotation also exhibits an interesting characteristic of Southern Presbyterians throughout the entire period of our study, namely, their condemnation of the slave trade. The Missionary expressed the hope that the colonization movement would "be the instrument of putting an eternal period to that infamous traffick which is 'human nature's broadest, foulest blot.'" (May 20, 1822). Thus, by somewhat curious logic, the means-- the African slave trade-- was morally wrong, but the end--slavery itself-- was not.

a slave who had been executed by burning.[1] Apparently several Northern papers picked up the letter and gave it wide circulation to show the cruelty of slavery. The attack on the slave states started by the letter provoked a sharp reaction on the part of Benjamin Gildersleeve, the editor, who not only denied the allegations of the Northern papers but defended the action of the authorities in the case by reprinting in full the official court record of the slave's crimes.[2]

Gildersleeve (who seems generally to have avoided controversy of any type as long as possible throughout his long career) took no notice of the rising tide of abolitionism until 1833, when he noted that abolitionism should not be confused with colonization, since the goals of the two movements were radically different.[3] A few weeks later he had a more pressing reason to note the feelings of the South on the matter of abolition. Reverend J. B. Pinney, who had been a Presbyterian missionary in Liberia briefly, had spoken in the Columbia, South Carolina, Presbyterian Church concerning the state of missions in Africa and particularly the status of the Liberian colony. The exact nature of his remarks is unclear, but many blacks were present for his address, and some whites apparently felt that his remarks might tend to make the blacks discontent with their lot and desire freedom. A mob quickly assembled, and Pinney's life was spared only by secretly spiriting him out of town. Pinney himself was by no means inclined toward abolition; as his defenders made clear, he had been born in a slave state (Georgia) and was "wholly identified with the interests of the South".[4] The incident is of interest for

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[1]Charleston Observer, June 12, 1830.

[2]Charleston Observer, July 10, 1830.

[3]Charleston Observer, August 3, 1833.

[4]Letter of "The Voice of a Multitude", Charleston Observer, September 28, 1833. On the entire incident see the Charleston Observer, Septem-

two reasons especially. First, it shows the extreme intolerance of many in the lower South at this date. Second, the incident received wide publicity; this in turn had the effect of causing Presbyterians to come forward and stoutly defend themselves against the charge that they had abolitionist tendencies. In order to defend themselves against an extreme charge--for which there was no real evidence--they went to the opposite extreme and loudly affirmed their orthodoxy on the slavery issue.

The extreme intolerance of the abolitionist position is seen also in the views of the Southern Christian Herald, printed in Columbia, South Carolina, and devoted to the defense of Old School Presbyterianism.[1]

> The evil (abolitionism) was once insignificant, and might then have been put down, by the strong arm of universal and public disapprobation. It once was a dark spot as the size of a man's hand above the horizon, but it has ascended and expanded itself over the heavens, black, gloomy, portentous, threatening our country, with the horrors of civil war and discord ....Is there nothing alarming in all this? Are we premature or rash in our warnings?[2]

In similar manner many individuals expressed their

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ber 14, 1833; September 28, 1833; October 5, 1833; Southern Religious Telegraph September 20, 1833. The mob itself consisted of persons who had not been present at the meeting.

[1]Gildersleeve, editor of the Charleston Observer, refused to discuss the controversies in the General Assembly at first; the Southern Christian Herald was started probably to counteract his refusal to bring the issues before the people. It started publication in 1834, and sold its subscription list to William S. Plumer's Watchman of the South (Richmond) in 1838. It was one of the few papers to include advertisements for slave sales and runaways. The editor was Richard Gladney.

[2]Southern Christian Herald, July 8, 1834. The editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph, Amasa Converse, acknowledged that he had no more love for abolitionists than Gladney, but felt he had greatly overestimated the influence and danger of the abolition movement. Southern Religious Telegraph, July 18, 1834. The difference in views shows vividly the more extreme attitude of Presbyterians in South Carolina and Georgia.

personal distaste for the rising tide of abolition. Moses Waddel, director of the noted Willington Academy in South Carolina and former president of the University of Georgia, found it necessary to remove one of his teachers at the Academy because of his abolitionist tendencies.[1]

What is remarkable is that some anti-slavery sentiment still existed in the region during this time. One instance in particular caused a furor in the Synod, and is of interest partly for the anti-slavery sentiment of the individual and partly for the strong reaction he caused. Colonel J. H. Lumpkin, a member of the Board of Directors of Columbia Theological Seminary, had participated in a meeting in Boston designed to gain support for the new Seminary. It soon became known in the South that his speech on the occasion had included some statements unfavorable to slavery. In answer to one of his critics, Lumkin sought to clarify his position:

> Finally, you enquire, "Did Georgia send you to Boston, to call upon your Maker to witness, that the most violent abolitionist at the North, could not more sincerely desire the dissolution of the ties between the master and the slave, that yourself." I answer again--No! Neither did I claim to represent her. But because I am a citizen of a slaveholding State, I am not therefore to be deprived of the freedom of opinion, guaranteed to the humbliest individual. It is true, Sir, I did admit in the Capitol of New-England, that slavery, in my own opinion, was wrong. And gave it also as my firm belief, (a belief long entertained, and at no time concealed from those I associate with) that the South would have been better off, had the evil never existed, and that her interest would now be promoted, could she satisfactorily rid herself of it.[2]

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[1]"I knew nothing of him but that he was qualified & of excellent Character; but I soon found to my cost that he entertained sentiments of the most unpopular kind & that all my friends were much surprised that I should encourage a professed advocate for 'immediate abolition of slavery'." Moses Waddel to William Porcher Miles, MS letter, March 20, 1834. William Percher Miles Papers, University of North Carolina.

[2]"Col. Lumpkin's Vindication", Charleston Observer, September 21, 1833.

Lumpkin went on to say that abolition, as propounded by such men as Garrison, was not the answer and could only lead to bloodshed; he defended his actions in Boston by saying he had strongly urged the North not to interfere in the South's domestic problems.

A second individual who likewise expressed some degree of anti-slavery sentiment was J. Leighton Wilson. Wilson, a member of the Presbytery of Harmony (South Carolina), went to Western Africa as a missionary.[1] Shortly before going he wrote to his future wife in Savannah concerning the disposal of a number of slaves she had inherited.

> I would say about your negroes, if possible, by all means colonize them--for I hold that every human being who is capable of self government, & would be happier in a state of freedom, than in bondage, ought to be free. I am not a friend however to immediate & universal emancipation; for the simple reason that our negroes are not ready for freedom & would be worse in that than in their present condition....I do not concieve (sic) that all negroes are fit to colonize--not having been accustomed to provide for themselves, they may suffer, as many have in Liberia....You know the character of your negroes & can judge best whether they are fit subjects for Colonization.[2]

The defense of slavery in the Presbyterian churches of the lower South reached a new stage in 1834 and 1835, with the adoption

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[1]It is worth noting that Wilson went (under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) to Cape Palmas, the colony founded by the Maryland Colonization Society. Unlike most other colonization societies, the Maryland Colonization Society had emancipation as an expressed goal.

[2]J. Leighton Wilson to Jane Bayard, October 24, 1833, MS letter, John Leighton Wilson Papers, Montreat. See also J. Leighton Wilson to William Wilson, March, 1838, MS letter, John Leighton Papers, Montreat; this letter deals with two slaves owned by Wilson himself, and expresses Wilson's desire to free them since he has serious scruples about retaining them. His wife's slaves were eventually sent to Africa, and much to Wilson's grief they reverted to paganism. See Hampden C. DuBose, Memoirs of Rev. John Leighton Wilson, D.D. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1895), pp. 100, 103. Wilson was also offered the governorship of Liberia before he left for Africa, which he refused. J. Leighton Wilson to Jane Bayard, July 11, 1833, MS letter, John Leighton Wilson Papers, Montreat. On Wilson's later

of anti-abolitionist resolutions by various judicatories, largely in response to abolitionist pressures in the General Assembly. The earliest of these was a brief resolution passed by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia at its annual meeting in December, 1834. The Synod had under consideration a communication from the Synod of North Carolina on the subject of the religious instruction of the slaves. In response the Synod adopted two resolutions concerning the subject, and then appended a resolution on abolition:

> Resolved unanimously, That in the opinion of this Synod, Abolition Societies and the principles upon which they are formed in the United States, are inconsistent with the best interests of the slaves, the right of slaveholders, & the great principles of our political institutions.[1]

There is within the statement a tacit assumption that slavery is a permanent and proper part of Southern society.

During the following year four of the six presbyteries in the Synod adopted resolutions relating to abolitionism. The first was an obscure minute which related to the payment of the Presbytery of South Carolina's portion of the cost of publishing the minutes of the previous Synod:

> But, for the future, this Presbytery would have it distinctly understood, that they will not pay for any thing more than the Minutes of Synod. And they moreover solemnly protest, against the publication of any documents by the Synod, which would give the least encouragement to Abolition principles, or interfere with our Civil Institutions.[2]

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controversy over his slaveholding with the A.B.C.F.M. see infra, pp. 256-59. For a convenient survey of his life see the sketch in DAB, Vol. 20, pp. 337-338.

[1]Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, December, 1834. Vol. 1, p. 403. It is worth noting that the resolution was widely republished in Southern Presbyterian papers. See Charleston Observer, September 19, 1835; Southern Religious Telegraph, October 9, 1835; American Presbyterian, October 1, 1835.

[2]Minutes of the Presbytery of South Carolina, MS, Vol. 2 (March, 1835), p. 64. Unfortunately no printed copy of the minutes of the Synod is

Although the material which gave rise to this minute is unknown, the anti-abolitionist sentiment is obvious.

SLAVERY: THE END OF DIVERSITY

The division between the second and third stages of the slavery question--the movement toward consensus, and the end of diversity--is in some sense an artificial distinction since the two stages blend together with almost no perceptible break. The difference is essentially one of motivation. The end of diversity came about as a result of two factors. The first was the rising tide of pro-slavery sentiment and a corresponding anti-abolition feeling within Southern society as a whole. The second was the threat of action within the General Assembly on the subject of slavery.

By mid-1835 the final stage had begun. Southern Presbyterians in the lower South might conceivably have maintained some diversity of opinion if the only pressure had been the sentiment of

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apparently extant; the MS minutes give no hint of the intention to print and circulate any additional items. The most likely guess would be the distribution of copies of the North Carolina Synod communication on slave instruction, although it is difficult to see how it could have been construed as giving any encouragement to abolition principles.

The Presbytery of South Carolina also noted the issue of abolition in its "Narrative of the State of Religion", not included in the Minutes but reprinted in the Charleston Observer. In speaking of the things which were causes of discouragement, the Narrative noted, "Second. The misguided and mistaken zeal which fanatics in the North, have attempted to manifest for the people of color among us;...We look forward with horror to the day, when Presbyterianism, will only be another name for abolition, or Emancipation; as some are evidently disposed to make it. Do not mistake us here, brethren. Do not suppose that this horror anticipated, is in consequence of any pecuniary loss which we may sustain by such an event. In view of other, and more awful consequences, that is truly a matter of minor, indeed, of no importance. We allude to the misery, and bloodshed, which would necessarily follow in the train of such an event--and the total exclusion of any man, professing to be a Presbyterian, from the privilege of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to this people."

"Narrative of the State of Religion in the S. C. Presbytery", Charleston Observer, May 2, 1835.

society. However, by mid-1835 the major source of pressure had become the course of events within the General Assembly. Whether or not the end of diversity would have come about without ecclesiastical pressure is impossible to say; that the storm of controversy in the Assembly marked the end of diversity is more easily seen.

The General Assembly of 1835 received a number of memorials on the subject of slavery, both from presbyteries and individuals. They were referred to a committee which reported to the Assembly; no action was taken, but the whole subject was referred to a special committee which was to report to the next Assembly.[1] The effect of this step was to solidify pro-slavery opinion in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia and bring about the virtual end of diversity.

The reaction of several presbyteries in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia indicated the agitated state of Southern Presbyterians. The resolution of the Presbytery of Flint River (Georgia) is illustrative:

> The following resolution was introduced, considered and unanimously adopted--Resold. That we as a Presbytery do censure in the highest degree of which we are capable the impolitic & unchristian Conduct of that infatuated people called Abolitionists, and that we never have given & never will give them the least countenance, believing that if their System of emancipation could be effected in the way they propose, it would evidently make our beloved Country, nothing less than one wide spread field of human blood.[2]

The Presbytery of Bethel (South Carolina) passed five resolutions on the subject; because they are typical of such resolutions we shall quote them in full:

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[1] GA Minutes, Vol. 2 (1835), p. 472, 490.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Flint River, MS, Vol. 1 (September 1835), p. 56.

1. Resolved, that we earnestly deprecate the unwarrantable and highly improper interference of the people of any other State with the domestic relation of Master and Slave.
2. ..That the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles, in not interfering with the question of Slavery; but uniformly recognizing the relations of Master and Servant, and giving full and affectionate instruction to both, is worthy of the imitation of all ministers of the Gospel.
3. ..That we will not patronize nor receive any pamphlets or News-papers of the Anti-Slavery Societies, and that we will discountenance the circulation of all such papers in the community.
4. ..That we deprecate the efforts of Northern fanatics to identify abolitionism with the cause of religion.
5. ..That we deprecate the discussion of abolitionist principles in the pulpit, regarding it as a lamentable prostitution of the sacred office.[1]

Similar in tone were resolutions passed by the Presbytery of Georgia. They made, however, more direct reference to the situation in the General Assembly, and disapproved even of the Assembly's appointment of a committee to consider the matter. Two resolutions are of particular interest; the first illustrates the intolerance of diversity very well:

> Res'd. 2nd. That this Presy will countenance no Minister--nor Agent of any benevolent Society--nor any Teacher--nor Merchant--nor Mechanick--nor any other man, come from whence he may--who holds the sentiments of Northern Abolitionists:--We will ever consider Such as Incendiaries whatever may be their Professions--the Enemies of our Country--the disturbers of our Churches--the destroyers of the peace of our families, & of all we hold most dear.[2]

The second shows the anxiety of the Presbyterians to demonstrate their orthodoxy on the slavery question:

> Res'd. 4th. That our beloved Southern Zion may calm their fears in regard to their Ministers & Elders--

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[1]Minutes of the Presbytery of Bethel, MS, Vol. 1, (October, 1835), pp. 194-195. The third resolution was undoubtedly inspired by the burning of abolition literature in the Charleston Post Office a few months before the meeting.

[2]Minutes of the Presbytery of Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, (November, 1835), p. 219.

> they reject the tenets & doctrines of Abolitionism, & solemnly declare for themselves & their churches, that they never were, & cannot be Abolitionists.[1]

The Presbytery of Charleston Union also adopted a series of resolutions expressing disapproval of ecclesiastical interference in regard to slavery. In general the agitation of this time diverted Southern Presbyterians from any criticism of the evils of slavery; Charleston Union, however, noted that slavery had many attendant evils which Christians should work to alleviate.[2]

Benjamin Gildersleeve's Charleston Observer joined the rising tide of anti-abolition feeling and gave more extended coverage to the abolition movement and the growing controversy in the General Assembly. Gildersleeve had visited the Charleston Post Office and had seen the vast quantity of abolition literature; he predicted it would not be read. His prophecy was accurate, since the literature was burned by a mob. He expressed regret at the means used, but not the end achieved.[3] A week later he struck out at the work of the abolitionists and predicted dire results if their efforts went unchecked.

> It does not require a prophet to foretell what must be the consequence of persistance, in efforts of the kind and character, such as Garrison, Thompson, &c. advocate and sustain....They have been told that they were severing the cords which bind together our said compact, and yet they persist in their frenzied course. And still darker scenes are looming up in the prospect before us. We will not name them--But for the sake of humanity, and religion, and peace, we beg to be spared from the consequences of this misguided philanthropy.[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Charleston Union, MS, Vol. 1 (November, 1835), pp. 197-199.

[3] Charleston Observer, August 1, 1835. The issue contains three editorials related to the subject, each set in type at a different time and thus reflecting the changing events in Charleston. See also the issue of August 15, 1835.

[4] Ibid., August 8, 1835. Gildersleeve rather gleefully took note of the alleged embezzlement by the British abolitionist, George Thompson. October 31, 1835.

A month later Gildersleeve expressed the conviction that secular papers in the South were unwise in publishing extracts from abolition literature, although they published answers in the same issues. "True the antidote and the poison are given together, but may not the poison in some instances take effect where the antidote is powerless?"[1] The same issue also contended that public meetings called in the South to protest abolition did no good, since there was no difference of opinion at all in the South on the question of abolition. By late October Gildersleeve was backing editorially the passing of laws which would prevent anti-slavery literature being circulated in the State, and noted that any editor even suspected of abolitionist leanings would find himself without patronage in the South.[2] The end of diversity was in sight.

The threat of agitation on the slavery issue within the General Assembly led to another development among Southern Presbyterians generally, including those in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. This was the development of a systematic pro-slavery argument, based on Biblical grounds, which contended that slavery was not only sanctioned by Scripture, but was a positive good given to society by God.

The first extended treatment of this position by a Presbyterian in the Synod was apparently a volume printed in 1835 entitled, Remarks upon Slavery, occasioned by attempts made to circulate improper publications in the Southern States--by a Citizen of Georgia. The "Citizen of Georgia" was identified by the Charleston

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[1]Ibid., September 12, 1835.

[2]Ibid., October 24, 1835.

Observer as William J. Hobby, an elder in the Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia.[1] The work was almost immediately republished in its entirety in the Charleston Observer.[2] In general, Hobby defended slavery along lines that would become common in later Biblical defenses of the institution of slavery.[3] Beginning with a survey of slavery in both the Old and New Testaments, he concluded that slavery was no where forbidden by Scripture, and everywhere the Bible gave full sanction to the rights of masters to hold slaves. Furthermore, as practiced in the South, it provided benefits to the slave which far exceeded the benefits available to workers under other types of labor systems. Abolitionism, on the other hand, would only lead to violence and social chaos. Slavery was but a reflection of the fact that God had ordained inequalities among men which could never be eliminated.

Concern over the agitation of the slavery issue in the General Assembly became greater as the 1836 Assembly approached, and would continue through the 1839 Assembly. The events which led eventually to the excinding of certain New School synods in 1837 and the establishment of two separate General Assemblies have been the subject of voluminous literature. Attention has also been paid to the question of the influence of the Southern Synods on the division, and especially the influence of slavery on the schism.[4] In our

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[1]Ibid., September 19, 1835.

[2]The book was published in serial form, beginning with the October 3 issue and continuing weekly through the issue of November 28, 1835. We have not had access to an original edition of the book.

[3]For a general survey of the religious pro-slavery argument in the South see William S. Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 200-241.

[4]An example of those who see slavery as the major factor in the division of the Church is C. Bruce Staiger, "Abolitionism and the

discussion of the events surrounding the 1837 division we shall be only secondarily concerned with the influence of the South and slavery on the events in the General Assembly; our primary concern will be with the influence of the events in the General Assembly on the Southern Presbyterian view of slavery.

It is wrong to suggest that slavery agitation in the General Assembly was the only issue which concerned Presbyterians in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia during this period.[1] However, beyond doubt slavery was the controlling issue for the Synod in the controversies. It soon became evident to the Synod that the 1836 Assembly might prove crucial, and that an all-out effort should be made to make certain the Southern position was represented in the Assembly. A correspondent in the Southern Christian Herald noted an abolition resolution passed by the Synod of Illinois which was to be presented to the next General Assembly, and saw an ominous warning to the South:

> Let then every Southern Presbytery be fully represented in the next Assembly; and that too, by Southern men--by men born and reared up under Southern institutions ....It has often been a matter of convenience to send to the Assembly brethren, whose interests and connexions render a visit to the North both pleasant and desirable

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Presbyterian Schism of 1837-1838," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 36 (1949), pp. 391-414. More balanced are the views of Elwyn A. Smith, "The Role of the South in the Presbyterian Schism of 1837-1838," Church History, Vol. 29 (1960), pp. 44-63, and E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 377-394. For an assessment of the strength of abolitionism among New School Presbyterians at this time see Marsden, op. cit., pp. 93-101.

[1]The doctrinal issues were debated in detail in the Synod as early as 1834. Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1 (December, 1834), pp. 415-418. Also see Minutes of the Presbytery of Bethel, MS, Vol. 1 (October, 1834), pp. 157-160; Vol. 1 (October, 1836), pp.231-233. In 1834 Gildersleeve declared that the South had no interest in the Old School-New School controversy. (Charleston Observer, July 19, 1834. See also letter of August 23, congratulating him on staying out of the controversy.) However, the fact that the Southern

> ....But in the present crisis of the Church, methinks, they themselves would say it becomes Southern men to contend for Southern rights.[1]

Of more importance in shaping Southern Presbyterian opinion, both in the Synod and elsewhere in the South, was a circular letter denouncing slavery sent to every presbytery by the Presbytery of Chillicothe (Ohio), which contained a number of men who had migrated from the South because of slavery.[2] Within the Synod only one Presbytery responded directly to the letter, although it is probable that other presbyteries received them and were influenced by them to take action.[3] The one presbytery to respond was Flint River, which accused the "infatuated authors" of the letter of being "in singular ignorance of the matter" of slavery, and passed a series of resolutions denying that slavery was unbiblical and instructing its commissioners to the General Assembly

> To assure the Assembly that it is the solemn conviction of this Presbyt that every such attempt (to agitate slavery) unless suppressed will tend to produce a speedy dissolution of those ties which have so long bound us together in a delightful ecclesiastical union.[4]

This resolution indicates a two-fold reaction which was even clearer in several other presbyteries: the practice of instructing

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Christian Herald was able to achieve a respectable circulation shows there were many who were interested in the doctrinal issues.

[1]"Knox," Southern Christian Herald, February 3, 1836.

[2]The text of the letter can be found in James Smylie, A Review of a Letter, from the Presbytery of Chillicothe, to the Presbytery of Mississippi, on the Subject of Slavery (Woodville, Mississippi: Wm. Norris and Co., 1836), pp. 7-9. The letter was only endorsed by one presbytery in the whole Assembly; for representative responses see R. C. Galbraith, The History of the Chillicothe Presbytery (Chillicothe, Ohio: Scioio Gazette Book and Job Office, 1889), pp. 132-135.

[3]The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Charleston Union made known the fact that he had received some resolutions from a presybtery in Ohio, but had promptly returned them unread to the postmaster. Charleston Observer, January 23, 1836.

[4]Minutes of the Presbytery of Flint River, MS, Vol. 1,(March, 1836), pp. 86-88.

the commissioners to the Assembly, and the threat of withdrawal over the slavery question. A third feature was also emerging in the months before the 1836 Assembly which would have wide influence; this was the affirmation that slavery was wholly a civil matter, and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the Church. Charleston Union Presbytery, for example, stated its convictions on the matter:

> It is a principle which meets the views of this body, that slavery as it exists among us is a political Institution, with which ecclesiastical Judicatories have not the smallest right to interfere; and in relation to which any interference, especially at the present momentous crisis, would be morally wrong and fraught with the most dangerous and pernicious consequences.[1]

The Presbytery then instructed its commissioners to defend this viewpoint in the Assembly, and, if the Assembly persisted in taking action on slavery, they were to

> withdraw from the Assembly with becoming dignity; not willing to be associated with a body of men who denounce the ministers and members of Southern Churches as Pirates and men stealers, or who cooperate with those who thus denounce them.[2]

Similar resolutions were adopted by Hopewell Presbytery, which sought to spell out the exact relation of the Church to slavery:

> Slavery is a political institution, with which the Church has nothing to do, except to inculcate the duties of Master, and Slave, and to use lawful spiritual means to have all, both bond, and free, to become one in Christ by faith.[3]

The Presbytery likewise instructed its delegates to withdraw, and the Presbytery "from that moment will regard itself independent of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church."[4]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Charleston Union, MS, Vol. 1 (April, 1836), p. 209.

[2] Ibid., p. 210.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of Hopewell, MS, Vol. 2 (April, 1836), p. 34.

[4] Ibid.

Both Presbyterian periodicals in the Synod expressed pessimism about the eventual outcome of the Assembly controversies. The Southern Christian Herald stated its position bluntly:

> Our northern brethren ought to know what are our opinions, and what must be the inevitable result of legislation on the subject in the General Assembly....There is nothing we believe more firmly than that the subject of slavery will divide the General Assembly....We are aware that division is unpleasant, and should be regretted on many accounts. But it would certainly be better than continual warfare.[1]

The Charleston Observer was less pessimistic at first, noting that "It cannot be disguised that there is a spirit at work unfavorable to the continuence of the union which has hitherto bound our Churches together in comparative harmony and in Christian fellowship."[2] A month later, Gildersleeve noted the anti-slavery convictions of several men on the General Assembly committee on slavery, and stated that "Should a report be made in conformity with their views, and adopted by the Assembly, it would be the signal for the dissolution of that body."[3] He then urged the Assembly to declare slavery a civil matter only.

The 1836 General Assembly proved a disappointment to the Southern Church. The slavery committee report came up for consideration; included in it was the affirmation "That it is not expedient for the Assembly to take any further order in relation to this subject."[4] A minority report, however, included a strong condemnation

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[1]Southern Christian Herald, February 4, 1836.

[2]Charleston Observer, February 13, 1836.

[3]Ibid., March 19, 1836. The editorial further said that a position advocating gradual emancipation would have the same effect as a resolution advocating immediate abolition.

[4]GA Minutes, Vol. 2, (1836), p. 507.

of slavery as "a heinous sin."[1] The whole question was then "indefinitely postponed" by a vote of 154 to 87.[2] It is, however, a matter of interest that many Southern delegates joined with those of abolitionist convictions in voting against the motion to postpone. The reason for this was clear. The South wanted the issue settled, and in their view the only way to do this was to pass the original committee report which declared the matter beyond the jurisdiction of the Assembly.[3]

It was thus clear that renewed efforts would have to be made to keep the slavery issue out of the Assembly; it was also clear that the matter would come up again in the next Assembly. The Synod of South Carolina examined in detail the various questions which were dividing the Church, and in relation to slavery passed the following resolutions:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 507-509.

[2] Ibid., p. 530.

[3] "The decision on the Slavery question is perhaps 'as it should be'--though it settles nothing. Its indefinite postponement leaves the subject where it was, to the great disappointment of the few abolitionists in the Assembly, and also in opposition to the wishes of a very large majority of the Southern delegation...." Charleston Observer, June 25, 1836.

The Moderator of the 1836 Assembly was John Witherspoon, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Camden, South Carolina. Insight on the slavery issue in the Assembly is given by a letter written by him during the Assembly (but before the final action had been taken). "It is said--there are 150 abolitionists on the floor of the Assembly. I can scarcely believe this....The Southern delegates have had several meetings on the Subject of the Slavery Question....The Moderator of the General Assembly has received (as I have /been/ assured) several insulting letters. One was a print, the upper part representing a Mob hanging a man-- The Devil seated near, with whip in hand, looking on and urging the infuriated multitude to their work. The Moderator's name is written at his back, and the warning "You had better let the Abolitionists alone." He had borne rather hard on them at a Colonization meeting the night before. The lower half of the print, was an exhibition of the opening of the Mail in your city /Charleston/, and burning the incendiary pamphlets and papers. There were various devices and insignia: The Constitution--Tobacco--Cotton--"20,000

> Resolved 1st, that as the relation of Master and Slave is a civil and domestic institution, it is one on which no Judicatory of the Church has the right or the power to legislate.
> Resolved 2nd. That the Presbyteries constituting this Synod, be requested to instruct their Delegates to the next General Assembly to vote upon no proposition in relation to the institution of Domestic Slavery, unless it be in favour of the truth that it is a civil institution, upon which the Judicatories of the Church have no right to legislate. And to instruct them, further to withdraw from the Assembly should that body take any action which in their opinion, asserts the right of Legislation upon that subject.[1]

Since most presbyteries had already taken action in the previous year little formal action was felt necessary by the presbyteries before the 1837 Assembly; only the Presbytery of Flint River took official action to renew its instructions to its delegates.[2]

The main development between the 1836 and 1837 Assemblies in the South--especially in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia--was the movement to form a separate Southern Assembly. Immediately after the 1836 Assembly Gildersleeve noted that it was generally

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Reward for Tappan"--the names of different incendiary news papers....I have been told abolitionism abounds in this region--& I partly believe it. I say Sir--Let the South look well to her interests. I can see nothing to save the Church from division." John Witherspoon to Thomas Smyth, MS letter, May 26, 1836, Smyth Letter Book, Montreat. The letter was printed in edited form in the Charleston Observer, June 11, 1836.

[1]Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. MS, Vol. 1, (December, 1836), p. 483. The Presbytery of Harmony had added its name to the list of those presbyteries in the Synod which had taken official action in instructing its delegates on the slavery issue, at its Fall, 1836, meeting. Minutes of the Presbytery of Harmony, MS, Vol. 1, (October, 1836), pp. 162-163. The Presbytery gave unwitting witness to the isolation of the South in the preamble to its resolutions: "Whereas sundry persons in Scotland and England and others in the North, East and West of our Country have denounced slavery as obnoxious to the law of God, and some of them have presented before the Genl. Assembly of our church and the Congress of this nation memorials and petitions with the avowed object of bringing into disgrace slaveholders and abolishing the relation of master and slave...."

[2]Minutes of the Presbytery of Flint River, MS, Vol. 1 (March, 1837), pp. 124-125.

agreed that a division would probably come. The real question, therefore, was how the division should be effected. Should all adhering to the Old School unite, for example, or should the division be made along geographical lines, with the South forming its own Assembly? He admitted that the latter would settle the slavery issue, but felt it was unwise in the long run, and might even encourage "the disruption of our social and political ties."[1] The Southern Christian Herald likewise came out against a geographical division, asserting that it was exactly what the abolitionists wanted. The only justification for a geographical division would be if the abolitionists became a majority in the national Assembly.[2] The Presbytery of South Carolina came out against a geographical division, saying they would stay with the orthodox party in the North as long as they did not interfere with slavery.[3] At this time those advocating a division along sectional lines had no way of making their stand known on a large scale; the widespread discussion of the matter, however, indicates that there was probably much sentiment favoring such an action.

The 1837 Assembly was decisive as far as the course of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was concerned. In a stormy session the so-called Old School, having a majority, abrogated the agreement of 1801 whereby the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches acted together in certain missionary areas, especially in the

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[1]Charleston Observer, July 2, 1836.

[2]Southern Christian Herald, July 29, 1836. See also various letters to the editor (all opposing a geographical division): July 29, 1836; October 14, 1836; November 11, 1836.

[3]Southern Christian Herald, October 28, 1836; American Presbyterian, November 24, 1836. The action was the approval of the report of the presbytery's General Assembly commissioners; the report was not included in the minutes of the Presbytery, but published in various papers.

Northwest. The Assembly then excinded four synods which had been formed under the 1801 agreement, and which were almost exclusively New School. In regard to slavery, the Assembly moved to postpone the issue indefinitely.[1] Unlike the Southern reaction at the previous meeting of the Assembly, Southern delegates almost unanimously voted in favor of the motion.[2]

The division of the General Assembly led to continued discussion over slavery in the South. The Old School-New School controversy is usually said to have been concluded in the main in 1838, with the formal formation of two separate General Assemblies. In the lower South, however, the controversy raged with unabated intensity through the 1839 Assembly until it was absolutely certain to Southerners that the issue of slavery would not be raised in the Old School.

The course that the controversy would take between the 1837 and 1839 Assemblies was clearly indicated in the debate over the

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[1] GA Minutes, Vol. 2, (1837), p. 629.

[2] This led to immediate speculation that the Old School delegates from the North had made a secret agreement with the Southern delegates whereby slavery would not be discussed in the Assembly if the South would agree to vote for the excinding act. The Old School did meet in secret session in a pre-Assembly convention (to which most Southern presbyteries sent delegates), but whether or not an overt agreement was made is still a matter of speculation. It is clear that the Northern Old School could not have taken the action it did had it not had the cooperation of the Southern delegates. In light of our present work the following points should be noted in any discussion of the action of the South in the General Assembly. 1) The sympathies of the South generally were with the Old School on the doctrinal issues involved in the schism. While many felt that such issues were not serious enough to cause division, in any vote on such matters the South would vote for the Old School. 2) The repeated assertions by Southern judicatories that they would withdraw if the matter of slavery was agitated were no secret in the North. 3) If there had been a secret agreement over slavery it is strange that the South generally expressed fears over the course the Assembly might take in the matter until it was clear (in the 1839 Assembly) that the Old School would not agitate the matter.

1837 Assembly's action in the 1837 meeting of the Synod.[1] A committee appointed to report on the proceedings of the Assembly introduced four resolutions approving the Assembly's actions; slavery was not mentioned by the committee. Immediately, however, an extended substitute resolution was introduced which called attention to the fact that the Assembly action on slavery passed in 1818 was still on the records of the Church. That action, however, was in clear conflict with the Synod's action of 1836, declaring slavery a civil matter beyond the jurisdiction of the Church. The substitute motion then urged that the Synod take no action to support the General Assembly until the 1818 act had been rescinded and the matter of slavery declared a civil matter. The substitute was eventually withdrawn, but a committee was appointed to draft resolutions concerning the Synod's position on slavery.

The committee's report included a statement urging the General Assembly to declare slavery a civil matter, as well as the following resolution in regard to the 1818 action of the Assembly:

> Resolved 2nd. That this Synod look upon whatever acts heretofore passed by the Assembly, which have been of the nature of Legislative acts on the subject of Slavery, as without authority and void and so shall consider all similar acts in time to come.[2]

The report, however, did not meet with the approval of some, and a longer substitute was introduced, which declared the 1818 act "null and void", and expressed the conviction

> That in the opinion of this Synod, Slavery in the abstract, per se, never has been, and never can be proved to be a

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[1]The discussions will be found in Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 2, (1837), pp. 3-24.

[2]Ibid., Vol. 2 (1837), p. 19. The striking similarity between this resolution and the position taken by South Carolina in the nullification controversy is immediately apparent.

> moral evil or sin--and consequently that those who assume this as an established position or lay it down as a fundamental principle in morals and religion, are acting on false premises.[1]

The substitute further acknowledged the existence of evils in the slavery system, but urged Christians to work for their amelioration; it likewise deplored "those who ignorantly, rashly, and impiously attempt the removal of an imaginary evil, and thus aim a death blow at the bonds of society...."[2] Finally, the motion demanded that a memorial be sent from the Synod to the Assembly to be certain that the 1818 act was rescinded. The substitute motion lost, however, and the original committee report was adopted. The reason for the rejection of the stronger substitute motion is uncertain, but the most likely explanation is that the majority of the Synod opposed agitating the subject more than necessary by sending a memorial to the Assembly requiring the repeal of the 1818 act.[3]

The issue of the status of the 1818 action was not quieted by the Synod's report, however. It soon became clear that the controversy over the 1818 action was entangled with other ecclesiastical issues, and that many were raising the issue in the hope that the Synod could be persuaded to withdraw from the General Assembly and form a separate Southern organization. At its September, 1837, meeting the Presbytery of Hopewell (Georgia) had been petitioned to withdraw from the General Assembly by Rev. C. W. Howard, a professor at the Presbyterian-backed Oglethorpe University. The motion gave the agitation

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[1] Ibid., p. 20.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The Synod action was to be sent to the General Assembly, however, hoping that the 1838 Assembly would adopt the Synod's position that slavery was a civil matter.

of slavery as the major reason for the proposed division.[1] The motion, however, was indefinitely postponed.[2] Howard then published a pamphlet defending his position, in which he contended that the 1818 Assembly action on slavery was a major barrier to continued relations with the Old School Assembly.[3] The Charleston Observer accused Howard of trying to aid the New School; if the South withdrew from the Assembly, the next (1838) General Assembly would be controlled by the New School, which would then reverse the actions of the 1837 Assembly.[4] Their view of Howard's motives may have been accurate; it is worth noting that the strongest backing of Howard came from the Southern Religious Telegraph, which by this time had taken a New School position.[5]

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[1]The motion is not given in the Minutes of the Presbytery; it can be found in the Charleston Observer, November 4, 1837.

[2]Minutes of the Presbytery of Hopewell, MS, Vol. 2 (1837), p. 60. The Minutes give no hint of the actual nature of the debate; the Charleston Observer said it lasted several hours, and gave a summary of the main motions. September 30, 1837.

[3]It is doubtful if a copy is extant, but it was reprinted in the Southern Religious Telegraph, December 1, December 8, and December 15, 1837; the Charleston Observer gave a lengthy summary, November 4, 1837.

[4]Charleston Observer, November 4, 1837.

[5]See the editor's comments on Howard's pamphlet, Southern Religious Telegraph, December 1, 1837. Converse also reprinted a letter from a member of Hopewell Presbytery contending that Howard's resolutions were actually expressive of the desires of the majority of the Presbytery. Southern Religious Telegraph, November 10, 1837.

The Spring, 1838, meeting of Hopewell Presbytery passed resolutions on slavery identical to those passed by the Synod at its December, 1837, meeting. The next meeting of the Presbytery in September, 1838, (after the 1838 Assembly had met), reaffirmed its position and urged that the slavery issue not be agitated; stronger substitute motions similar to Howard's of a year earlier were overwhelmingly defeated. The MS Minutes of Hopewell Presbytery are missing for 1838; they can be found in the Charleston Observer, April 21, 1838, and October 20, 1838.

A more serious movement to withdraw from the General Assembly was centered in Charleston Union Presbytery. The Presbytery included many men who had strong ties with New England and Congregationalism, and who opposed the 1837 Assembly, when the Presbytery had gone on record opposing the pre-Assembly convention held by the Old School by a vote of eleven to nine.[1] For practical purposes the Presbytery then split, for the minority in the Presbytery sent delegates to the convention.[2] The delegates to the General Assembly from the majority of the Presbytery refused to sit in either the Old School or New School Assemblies (both of which met in Philadelphia), but instead visited both Assemblies. At the Fall, 1838, meeting of the Presbytery the majority refused to back either Assembly, and formed an independent presbytery. The minority declared itself the true Presbytery, and retained its connection with the Synod.

The exact place that slavery assumed in the withdrawal of Charleston Union Presbytery is difficult to assess. On one hand, the threat of agitation of the slavery issue was clearly the leading reason given for the Presbytery's refusal to join either the Old School or New School, both of which were felt to be infected with abolitionism.[3] On the other hand, however, other factors were

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[1]Minutes of the Presbytery of Charleston Union, MS, Vol. 1 (1837, April), p. 232.

[2]Charleston Observer, May 6, 1837.

[3]The act of 1818 was a major question in the Presbytery; the Presbytery had approved a proposal of Elipha White to petition the Assembly to repeal the 1818 action, and had included the full text of the 1818 resolution in their minutes to illustrate the extreme divergence between it and Southern opinion. Minutes of the Presbytery of Charleston Union, MS, Vol. 1, (April, 1838), pp. 255-260. See also the letters of Elipha White on his actions as the Presbytery's Commissioner to General Assembly in 1838, Charleston Observer, August 25 and September 1, 1838, and March 16, 1839. See also the exchange between W. C. Dana (representing the majority of the Presbytery) and Benjamin

undoubtedly at work, including the fact that the Presbytery had a long history of Congregationalism, which would make them suspicious of the strong central authority being exerted by the Old School Assembly. Normally they would have been expected to join the New School Assembly, but the issue of slavery kept them from this action.[1]

While there were movements to form a separate Southern Presbyterian Church in Hopewell and Charleston Union Presbyteries, the majority of the Presbyteries in the Synod approved the actions of the 1837 Assembly. However, the Synod felt itself endangered on two fronts. On one hand were those who called for withdrawal from any Northern ecclesiastical organization; on the other hand the General Assembly could still agitate the slavery issue. The 1818 slavery action was thus an enormous embarrassment, because it involved the

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Gildersleeve (of the minority), Charleston Observer, June 30, and July 7, 1838, and the letter of Benjamin Palmer, Southern Religious Telegraph, October 25, 1838. All of these give prominence to the question of slavery, the relevance of the 1818 action, and the probability of action in either Assembly on the issue.

[1]Although desiring to unite with other presbyteries to form a Southern body, the Presbytery found itself virtually alone in the South. It remained independent until 1852, when it was reunited with the Synod of South Carolina. The Minutes of the Presbytery are not extant, but much insight into the attitudes and aims of the members of the Presbytery can be gained from the Southern Christian Sentinel, published under the sponsorship of the Presbytery and under the editorship of Thomas Magruder, a member of the Presbytery. It was published weekly from March 2, 1839, until April, 1841, and then was published momentarily on a monthly basis, ceasing publication the end of 1841. Magruder outlined the policy of the paper in the first issue: "With respect to ecclesiastical relations, the Sentinel will advocate a SOUTHERN ORGANIZATION....It is now regarded by great numbers at the South, as the most effective method of restoring peace to our agitated and afflicted Church; and as the only plan which can permanently free the Southern Churches from Abolitionist aggression, and from foreign interference of every description." Southern Christian Sentinel, March 2, 1839.

Hereafter the term "Charleston Union Presbytery--Independent" will be used to refer to this body; the term "Charleston Union Presbytery" will refer to the group adhering to the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia.

Synod in a dilemma. If the Synod maintained its relationship with the General Assembly, was it not thereby approving the 1818 act? However, if it chose to ignore the 1818 action, or to declare it null and void, was it not opposing the strong Presbyterian polity for which the Old School was contending? The logical answer was for the General Assembly to rescind the 1818 action. The Synod (as we have seen) refused to take this stand. Beyond the Synod's fear of agitating the slavery issue was probably a realistic judgment that such a rescinding action was highly improbable, and if the Synod strongly backed such a move and then failed to secure its passage, it would find itself in an even more difficult position. A letter to the Charleston Observer summarized this difficulty concisely:

> By some a repeal of the action of the General Assembly of 1818 is insisted upon. To this measure there are two objections--while it would impose a burden upon the consciences of brethren at the North, too grevious to be borne, it would give no security to the South. Any subsequent Assembly might revive the resolutions of 1818.[1]

The writer then expressed his opinion that a geographical division was unwise, and would even endanger the unity of the United States. The only solution was for the Assembly to agree with the resolutions passed by the December, 1837, Synod meeting which declared that slavery was a civil matter only.

Such a position seemed the best way out of the dilemma, although it by no means solved the constitutional issue. As the 1838 Assembly approached, Presbyterians in the Synod felt it was crucial for the Synod's position to be heard and affirmed by the Assembly.

> Every orthodox paper, therefore, and every friend of the Presbyterian Church, should be on the alert and put forth every honest effort, to secure in the next

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[1]Letter of "Pacificus", Charleston Observer, March 3, 1838.

> assembly, an influence which will carry out the plan of reformation commenced by the last.[1]

The Presbytery of Flint River adopted a resolution almost identical to their 1837 resolution, declaring slavery a civil matter, and instructing its commissioners not to introduce "unnecessarily" the subject of slavery.[2] The Southern Christian Herald approved the Flint River action, and blamed the agitation over the 1818 action on Northern men in the South who simply wanted to disrupt the Church.[3]

The 1838 Old School Assembly proved a disappointment to those in the Synod. Two memorials on slavery came before the Assembly. One was from the Presbytery of Charleston Union, urging the repeal of the 1818 act; the other was from the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, urging that slavery be declared a civil matter. The committee on overtures "recommended that they be received and laid on the table without debate," which was accepted by the Assembly.[4] Thus the issue of slavery was left undecided. A suggestion that the Southern Christian Herald should suspend publication since it had achieved its goal of a doctrinally pure Church drew forth the answer that it must still continue its battle against the position that slavery was sin.[5] Thomas Smyth felt called upon to answer an article in the influential Charleston Mercury asserting that the Old School was clearly infested with abolitionists.[6] The annual Synod meeting debated at

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[1] Southern Christian Herald, March 8, 1838. The letter is not signed. See also the letter of "Archippus" in the same issue. Both connect a strong Southern representation in the Assembly with the threat of abolitionist agitation.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Flint River, Vol. 1 (March, 1838), p. 175.

[3] Southern Christian Herald, April 13, 1838.

[4] GA Minutes (O.S.), Vol. 3, (1838), p. 27.

[5] Southern Christian Herald, June 22, 1838.

[6] Charleston Observer, December 29, 1838.

length a resolution to declare itself independent because of the failure of the General Assembly to deal with the question of slavery in a satisfactory manner.[1]

By the time of the 1839 Assembly sentiment in the Synod seems to have shifted. The Synod made no effort to have slavery declared a civil institution in the Assembly, and most men began to adopt the position that the best course would be silence on the part of the Assembly, which by its very nature could be interpreted as a de facto repudiation of the 1818 resolutions and an affirmation that slavery was outside the province of the Church. The 1839 Old School Assembly received two memorials on slavery, both from Western judicatories of abolitionist sentiment. They were laid on the table without debate.[2] It was now clear to the South that the slavery question would not be agitated in the Old School Assembly. The surest sign of the Synod's reaction to the 1839 Assembly is the almost complete silence about the slavery issue in its judicatories and the religious press after the Assembly meeting. The period of controversy over slavery was over.

The rather involved course of the Old School - New School controversy in the Synod has been examined especially to see what the effect of the controversy was on their view of slavery. In essence, the ecclesiastical controversies of the latter half of the 1830's marked the end of the period of transition. By the end of the

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 2, (1838), pp. 41-47. A person present at the April, 1839, Hopewell Presbytery meeting declared that "Not a voice, not even a whisper" had been heard urging a separate Southern organization. Charleston Observer, April 20, 1839.

[2] GA Minutes (O.S.), 1839, p. 73.

controversy in 1839 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia had established its position on slavery, and this position would not change significantly throughout the period we are examining. Four characteristics in particular mark the attitude of the Synod at the end of this period.

The first characteristic was a direct result of the agitation of slavery in the General Assembly. This was the affirmation of the dogma that slavery as an institution was a civil matter only, and thus beyond the jurisdiction of the Church. The long range effect of this view should not be underestimated. Whereas the Church had often acted as a critic of slavery in the early period, and had at least retained the right to speak even when the right was not exercised, now the Church not only failed to speak but denied its right to do so. This did not mean that the Church had nothing at all to say about slavery, for it still retained the right to speak about the evils of slavery and the religious instruction of the slave. It did mean, however, that the full transition from the Church as critic to the Church as affirmer of Southern society had now come.

The remaining characteristics are less directly attributable to the ecclesiastical controversies; they were, instead, the result of all the pressures that were brought to bear on the Southern Church, secular and ecclesiastical. These characteristics were also closely related to each other.

The second characteristic was the development of a positive defense of slavery. This included not only the formal assertion that slavery was a God-given institution, but the informal, personal, assertion of the essential goodness of slavery. The editor of the Southern Christian Herald expressed the shift his views had undergone:

> We once doubted the lawfulness of slavery, not from any examination of the word of God, but from a sort of a

> natural impulse of feeling, as we suppose to be the case with most who entertain similar doubt; and we entered upon an investigation of the subject, determined that to whatever conclusion the word of God might lead, we should implicitly obey its authority. The result of the investigation was a thorough conviction that the Bible as clearly warrants slavery as it does the subordination of children to parents, or of citizens and subjects, to the powers that be; nor can we see how any dispassionate inquirer can arrive at a different conclusion.[1]

The Southern Christian Herald also republished extended excerpts from the lengthy defense of slavery by James Smylie, noting that such a defense was superfluous for most Presbyterians since the agitation of slavery "has induced most of those who had scruples to search the scriptures...and the result, we believe, has generally been the removal of their scruples."[2] The Abbeville (South Carolina) Bible Society, in large measure supported by Presbyterians, reported that it was even more essential to get the Bible into the hands of the people in light of the agitation over slavery, since it was there that Southern Christians would discover the lawfulness of slavery.[3]

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[1]Southern Christian Herald, August 31, 1838.

[2]Southern Christian Herald, March 2, 1838. The excerpts from Smylie's book were republished weekly during March and April, 1838. It is remarkable that no Presbyterian apologetic of slavery of any significance came from within the Synod at this time. In addition to the book by Smylie, other recommended reading on slavery included various articles in the Biblical Repertory published under the auspices of the faculty of Princeton Seminary. (See, for example, Southern Christian Herald, August 26, 1836). Full coverage was also given to the debates in Scotland between Robert Breckinridge (a noted Old School minister) and the British abolitionists, George Thompson and Dr. Wardlaw. Southern Christian Herald, August 26, 1836, and November 11, 1836; Charleston Observer, October 29, 1836.

[3]Ibid., September 2, 1836. The report was presented by Dr. William Barr, a Presbyterian minister.

This defense of slavery is seen in other ways also. The Charleston Observer gave a favorable review to a book about a Southern Presbyterian minister, saying it was worth reading just to show how well he treated his slaves, in opposition to the calumnies of the abolitionists against Southern slaveholders. (January 30, 1836). The editor also defended the Southern institution of slavery from the "misrepresentations" of the delegates from the British Congregational Union,

A third characteristic was a strong intolerance of any diverse views on the matter of slavery. We have noted some ways in which this was evident; several other aspects are also worth mentioning. For example, it is of interest that Presbyterians in the Synod took virtually no notice of colonization during the latter part of the period of transition; apparently even the goal of sending only free blacks back to Africa was held to be under suspicion.[1] The Charleston Observer took note of a group of slaves that had been freed some years before in Virginia; their freedom had been clearly

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who had published an unfavorable report upon their return to Great Britain. (January 2, 1836). He likewise denied that some individuals from Charleston had gone to the West Indies to study the possible effects of emancipation, saying that there was complete satisfaction in South Carolina with the institution of slavery, and thus there was no sentiment for emancipation. (October 27, 1838).

[1]Two individual exceptions should be noted. Dr. John Witherspoon remained interested in colonization, and furthermore connected it with emancipation. "My Brother, the cause /of emancipation/ was progressing far faster than the original settlement of our beloved country ever did, until the Abolitionist, in his new-light, ignorant folly, and spurious, furious charity, set his unhallowed foot upon the wheel of the Colonization Society, and retarded its progress for years to come." John Witherspoon to Samuel Miller, /1836/, quoted in Samuel Miller, The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D., Second Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, at Princeton, New Jersey. (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1869), p. 296.

The second exception is Dr. Charles Colcock Jones, noted for his great interest in the religious instruction of the slaves. In a letter to R. R. Gurley, of the American Colonization Society, Jones said, "But here let me congratulate you on the increasing prosperity of the Society and the strong hold it is taking on the public mind in our country....Time developes it as the best means of securing the greatest good to the African Race in our country. And I am constrained to think that the spirited but small opposition lately lifted against it has been /meant?/ for good, in unfolding the principles and efforts of the Society more fully...." Charles Culcock Jones to R. R. Gurley, September 13, 1833, MS letter, American Colonization Society Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. The letter is slightly before the final stage of the period of transition begins, but at a time when little sentiment for colonization was evident in the lower South. How Jones views the goals of colonization is not clear.

detrimental to their welfare. The implication was clear: emancipation in any form was an evil.[1] The intolerance of diversity was also evident in the refusal of Southern Presbyterians to patronize any Northern papers which might express alien views on slavery. The Southern Christian Herald declared:

> "We wish to see christians in the South independent of Northern papers....We must have religious papers that will not merely be neutral, but will raise their voice against that unholy alliance of church and state, of religion with the cause of abolition, which threatens to deluge the country in blood.[2]

On the other hand, one Northern publication was especially singled out for commendation because of its anti-abolitionist stand; this was the Biblical Repertory, published under the sponsorship of Princeton Seminary. It was constantly commended by the Southern religious press, and several judicatories endorsed it as well.[3] The intolerance of any diverse opinion is seen also in the support given Columbia Theological Seminary. One contributor to the Seminary stressed that it was important to have men graduate and fill pulpits who would not be hostile to Southern social institutions.[4] In a slightly different vein, abolitionism came in for unmitigated hostility. The Southern Christian Sentinel accused Garrison of espousing anarchy, and reprinted some of his views to prove their point.[5] The Charleston

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[1]Charleston Observer, October 27, 1838.

[2]Southern Christian Herald, March 2, 1836.

[3]Charleston Observer, September 6, 1834; April 1, 1837; February 17, 1838. Southern Christian Herald, August 26, 1836; May 5, 1837; July 28, 1837; August 31, 1838. Minutes of the Presbytery of Flint River, MS, Vol. 1 (September, 1838), p. 200; Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 2 (November, 1838), pp. 57-58.

[4]Charleston Observer, September 8, 1838.

[5]Southern Christian Sentinel, November 9, 1839.

Observer reprinted an attack on the Old School General Assembly from The Liberator, saying that "denunciation from such a source is high praise"; the paper also took full notice of the dissent which rent the abolition movement.[1] The Southern Christian Herald made sure that Garrison's anti-Sabbath views were thoroughly presented to its readers to show the anti-Christian tendencies of abolitionism.[2]

The fourth characteristic is a corollary of the third. This was the end of diversity on the question of slavery among Presbyterians in the Synod. Voting on slavery resolutions on the Synod and presbytery levels often was explicitly noted as unanimous; no hint of anti-slavery sentiment is evident in the religious press. The same sentiment is seen almost universally in the surviving papers of individuals.[3]

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[1]Charleston Observer, June 16, 1838; September 16, 1837.

[2]Southern Christian Herald, October 21, 1836.

[3]The sole exception of significance is John Witherspoon, pastor of the Church in Camden, S. C., who provides an interesting study in the dichotomy between the private convictions and public actions of an individual under great pressures. Witherspoon was the only slaveholder on the committee appointed by the 1835 General Assembly to investigate the matter of slavery; in 1836 he was moderator of the Assembly. A revealing series of letters, principally to his daughter and son-in-law, show his own inner turmoil at the very time he was considered a leader by the pro-slavery forces. The first indicates his sense of entanglement in slavery, and his fears of the future. "I will never be more deeply involved in slavery than I am now--We may shut our eyes to it but the curse of a righteous God is resting on our Southern Country. I am & ever have been a slave holder--and am willing to stand in my place & suffer with my countrymen--but this will not by any means change the face of affairs. The hour of heavens retribution will come...." (John Witherspoon to William McDowell, MS letter, December 11, 1835). It is important to note Witherspoon implies that he feels slavery is morally wrong. The second expresses his interest in moving to Illinois, and his fear of the future if slavery was not ended. "We have heard nothing about your brothers in Illinois since you left. No doubt they are doing well--as any one must be, in ordinary circumstances, in a free State--In this State of slavery I almost feel that every apparent blessing, is attended with a curse--and altho their wives have no dread of the future--there are but few husbands and Fathers of daughters, who do not feel at times dreadful

It would seem that the course of the slavery controversy

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apprehensions....Were it not for your sake My dear Susan I should not hesitate a moment about removing, and that, soon. This I say in confidence to you & Mr. McDowell--our country cannot remain as it is 10 years longer. Some of the wisest & best Southern Ministers think with me on this point. Dr Alexander of Princeton says, 5 years--Brother Penick /A Presbyterian pastor in North Carolina/ agrees with me perfectly." (John Witherspoon to Susan McDowell, MS letter, January 14, 1836).

A few weeks later he again expressed a desire to migrate to the free state of Illinois: "Wife says--I must not say one word about Illinois in my letter to you--So I will not--only that I could wish, that the Lord would so order it in his kind Providence that we might all be comfortably & profitably settled together there. But I am transgressing the old woman's injunction. Therefore I will only add that It Offers the finest field for comfort & happiness & wealth & usefulness of any State in the Union." (John Witherspoon to /?/, MS letter, February 6, 1836). Less than two weeks later he spoke again of the dangers facing the nation and his personal desires: "I must see Illinois before next winter. Mrs McCara is doing a wise thing in selling her negroes. A gloomy cloud is hanging over our native South and indeed over our whole land. A miracle of mercy will alone prevent the disunion of our country. Should we separate the aggressions of the N. on the S. in relation to Slavery will be tenfold more than now. In the South are large numbers who own no slaves & will not. Will they continue here? Never, and then how overwhelming in number will be the black to the white population. To you my children I can safely say I wish to God that I & mine with all my relations & friends, were out of this inauspicious section of our country. But I will contend for our Southern rights with my last life blood so long as duty calls me to abide here." (John Witherspoon to Susan McDowell, MS. letter, February 18, 1836). About this same time Witherspoon expressed his pessimism about the immediate prospects of emancipation, although looking for the eventual end of slavery. "Abolition or emancipation, immediately or in prospect, by legislative enactment, is not to be looked for from the South. The freedom of the blacks would be a curse to them and to the whites also. Our Union must be severed first. You ask, what then? Is slavery to be perpetual? No, my dear Brother; God forbid that it should be; nay, it cannot be.... One hundred and fifty years hence, the sun will look down on our land, without beholding one dark skinned slave. It will rise on Africa 'redeemed and disenthralled by the Genius of universal emancipation.'" (John Witherspoon to Samuel Miller, n.d., ca. 1836).

The pressure of events within the Church, however, brought Witherspoon inexorably to a change in his position. In a revealing letter written from the 1837 General assembly he again lamented the existence of slavery, but now held that no moral issue was involved. "We are progressing slowly in business. The slavery question will, I fear, be the most exciting & dividing in our body. Memorials & petitions from Synods & Presbyteries & Churches, are pouring in upon us from all the Northern section of our Church. My own opinion is, that when such questions meet us, it is better to take them & debate them fully & decide them; and that this course alone can give peace in the church. You know perhaps that I have been from my youth up, opposed to Slavery as it exists in the South, on the score of expediency. Nothing has

in the Synod would have led to a further characteristic, namely, a growing isolationism. In some ways this is true. The refusal of the Southern Presbyterians to read anything which might be tainted with abolition sentiment, and the strong tendency to rely on native-born ministers, led inevitably to intellectual and social isolation and stagnation. However, the remarkable thing about the period of transition in the Synod is that there was as little isolation as there was. As we shall see in Chapter Four, the dangers of a complete isolationism in the Synod during this period was true for the rest of the Southern Church as well. However, the Southern Presbyterians pulled back at the last minute from the brink of complete isolation, and for over two more decades they continued their national stance as part of the Presbyterian Church.

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so prostrated our Southern country in point of domestic improvement, as Slavery. And yet I believe African Slavery, lawful & not unchristian and that it is better for them, on the whole, than liberty without a due preparation for the reception of the blessing. Some may attribute this view to selfish motives, but I have nothing to gain from it--I never willingly & heartily bought or sold a human being. I have done so for the accommodation of the slave & my own domestick peace & Comfort but never for gain 'From the love of filthy lucre.'" In the same letter he expressed regret that he could not visit Illinois after the Assembly. (John Witherspoon to Susan McDowell, MS letter, May 25, 1837). As late as March, 1838, Witherspoon was on record favoring gradual emancipation, but renouncing abolition. (Charleston Observer, March 10, 1838). By this time he had apparently given up any thought of removal to Illinois; he had accepted a call to the Columbia, S. C., Church in 1837. Ill health, however, forced his resignation in early 1839. Information on Witherspoon can be found in Howe, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 495, 500-501. All of the above letters are in the Witherspoon-McDowell Papers, University of North Carolina, with the exception of the letter to Samuel Miller, which is quoted in Samuel Miller, op. cit., pp. 295-296.

PART II. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

CHAPTER II. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE SYNODS OF VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA, 1827-1839

Slavery: The Initial Impulse

Slavery: The Movement Toward Consensus

Slavery: The End of Diversity

Summary

CHAPTER TWO

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE SYNODS OF VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA, 1827-1839

The period of transition in the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina began at a slightly later time than that in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, and to some degree, it was the result of different pressures. As in South Carolina and Georgia, however, it can be divided into three rather distinct periods, and in the end the views of Presbyterians in Virginia and North Carolina are virtually identical with those of their brethren in the lower South.

SLAVERY: THE INITIAL IMPULSE

Unlike the lower South, the Virginia-North Carolina region continued to have a reservoir of anti-slavery sentiment after the debates over the admission of Missouri. As we have seen, this was true among Presbyterians in the two States as well; while immediate abolitionism was always rejected, anti-slavery sentiment continued to be expressed by some of the leading Presbyterians.[1]

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[1] As late as September, 1826, the Richmond Family Visitor reprinted the suggestions of Thomas Chalmers for the gradual emancipation of the slave population of the West Indies, implying that the same plan might be considered for the South. The same issue reprinted a speech by a politician from Maryland which condemned immediate abolition, but still looked for the eventual abolition of slavery: "But if there is any project of which I wish to be considered as the advocate, it is this: the gradual emancipation of the blacks, and their immediate removal, with their own consent and that of their masters, to the coast of Africa, or elsewhere if they prefer it. That slavery should

The initial impulse for a change in attitude on slavery began as a result of ecclesiastical pressures. In early 1827 news reached Virginia that the Synod of Ohio had taken action on the question of slavery, and that the Synod intended to bring the slavery issue before the next General Assembly. Although the Richmond Family Visitor published a disclaimer by a member of the Synod of Ohio (saying that slavery had been condemned as sin only by a committee of the Synod, but the report had been postponed by the Synod itself) there was still concern that a Church judicatory felt empowered to take such a stand.[1] The Ohio action was probably behind the following statement of John Holt Rice expressed in a letter to William Maxwell; we shall quote an extended portion of the letter, since it states clearly the thoughts of the leading Presbyterian in Virginia on the question at this date.

> I am most fully convinced that slavery is the greatest evil in our country, except whiskey; and it is my most ardent prayer that we may be delivered from it. But it is my full belief that the deliverance is not to be accomplished by the combination of benevolent societies. The great body of persons composing such societies are too little accustomed to calculate consequences. They go directly at the measure, and have no means of accomplishing it but the producing, by means of speeches and addresses, a strong excitment. But on a subject of this delicate character, where much opposition is to be encountered, these very means give the adversary an advantage, which he will not fail to use to the injury, perhaps to the destruction of the Society. While, therefore, I do most devoutly wish success to the Colonization Society, I do earnestly wish that its friends may not refer to it as a means of deliverance from slavery. Should that success which I hope for crown the efforts of this association, the existence of a prosperous colony on the western coast, will of itself do more for the cause of emancipation, than all that any, of all of us, now can effect by speaking of these things. So fully am I convinced of this,

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exist among us is a foul reproach...." Richmond Family Visitor, September 9, 1826.

[1] Richmond Family Visitor, February 3, 1827.

that I deplore every movement that raises any thing like opposition to the Society.

The reason why I am so strenuously opposed to any movement by the church, or the ministers of religion on this subject, is simply this. I am convinced that any thing we can do will injure religion, and retard the march of public feeling in relation to slavery. I take the case to be just this: as slavery exists among us, the only possible chance of deliverance is by making the people willing to get rid of it. At any rate, it is this or physical force....Slaves by law are held as property. If the church or the minister of religion touches the subject, it is touching what are called the rights of property. The jealousy among our countrymen on this subject is such, that we cannot move a step in this way, without wakening up the strongest opposition, and producing the most violent excitement. The whole mass of the community will be set in motion, and the great body of the church will be carried along. Under this conviction, I wish the ministers of religion to be convinced that there is nothing in the New Testament which obliges them to take hold of this subject directly. In fact, I believe that it never has fared well with either church or state, when the church meddled with temporal affairs. And I should--knowing how unmanageable religious feeling is, when not kept under the immediate influence of divine truth--be exceedingly afraid to see it brought to bear directly on the subject of slavery. Where the movement might end, I could not pretend to conjecture.

But I tell you what I wish. While we go on minding our own business, and endeavouring to make as many good christians as possible among masters and servants, let the subject of slavery be discussed in the political papers, Reviews, &c., as a question of political economy. Keep it entirely free from all ecclesiastical connexions, and from all the politics of the general government; and treat it as a matter of State concernment. Examine its effects on the agriculture, commerce, and manufactures of the State. Compare the expense of free and slave labour. Bring distinctly before the people the evil in its unavoidable operations and its fearful increase. Set them to calculating the weight of their burdens. Let them see how many old slaves, and young slaves, who produce nothing, they have to support. Show them how slavery deducts from the military force as well as the wealth of a country, &c. Considerations of this sort, combined with the benevolent feelings growing out of a gradual, uninterrupted progress of religion, will, I believe, set the people of their own accord to seek deliverance. They will foresee the necessity of a change; soon begin to prepare for it; and it will come about without violence or convulsion. Such is my opinion.[1]

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[1] John Holt Rice to William Maxwell, February 24, 1827, quoted in Maxwell, op. cit., pp. 306-308.

Rice made more direct reference to the threat of agitation over slavery in the General Assembly, in a letter to Archibald Alexander written several months later. We shall quote extensively again.

> I hear that the matter from the Synod of Ohio respecting slavery will be brought before the next General Assembly. Should this be the case, I fear that there will be a discussion of the subject. And I am under the fullest conviction that this will do very great injury. As soon as John Q. Adams was elected President of the United States, I foresaw that there was to be a violent collision between the north and the south; that the subject of slavery would be brought into party politics and religion; and that Presbyterians were to be greatly embarrassed by it....And if the Presbyterian Church will take hold of slavery, they may as well bid us abandon the Southern country. We must either do that, or make up our minds to bear the violence of persecution....
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> I am confident that already material injury has been done, in the way of impeding the progress of feeling in this country against slavery. There is a march of opinion on the subject, which would, if uninterrupted, at no distant date, annihilate this evil in Virginia....But as soon as the ministers of religion take hold of it, the old jealousy is revived, and people determine that the clergy shall not interfere in their secular interests, and their rights of property....I have long had it as an object dearest to my heart, to get Virginia free from slavery. I feel that the direct exertions of the church hinder the work. And I am suffering very deeply under apprehensions of mischief from the indiscreet agitation of the subject from Ohio.[1]

The two letters are revealing for several reasons. In the first place, Rice--consistent with his earlier views--still held that slavery was an evil which should be eliminated. However, it is clear that he now saw the abolition of slavery as a distant goal at best. Secondly, Rice now advocated a policy of complete silence on the part of the clergy concerning slavery, in contrast with his own policy a few years earlier while editor of the Virginia Evangelical

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[1] John Holt Rice to Archibald Alexander, April 14, 1827, quoted in Ibid., pp. 311-313.

and Literary Magazine. Closely related to this is a third aspect: slavery was a civil matter only, and thus was not a matter of concern for the Church. The question of its abolition was thus a pragmatic consideration only. A fourth aspect is his great caution on the subject of colonization; in no way was colonization to be connected with schemes for universal emancipation.[1] Finally, Rice saw that the agitation of the slavery issue would inevitably have grave effects on the entire Presbyterian Church.

In some ways, therefore, Rice was prophetic of the attitudes that would prevail within a few years. However, the Synod of Ohio memorial apparently was not presented to the General Assembly, and Rice's fears were not immediately realized.

The issue came up again almost immediately in the form of a memorial on slavery from the Synod of Indiana, which had been printed and distributed to all presbyteries.[2] The memorial generally

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[1] We thus would see a shift in Rice's position on the goals of the colonization movement. For his earlier position see Supra, pp. 94, 96-97. In this we disagree with the position taken by Louis Weeks III, "John Holt Rice and the American Colonization Society", Journal of Presbyterian History, Vol. 46, No. 1 (March, 1968), pp. 26-41. Weeks admits that Rice's public statements on slavery show a shift of position, but denies that he also shifted his opinion on colonization. He attributes this to the fact that Rice's private position never changed on slavery. While the letters to Maxwell and Alexander we have just quoted show he still considered slavery an evil, a shift of position is evident. Rice's earlier stand included the view that slavery was a subject of discussion within the Church; by implication, therefore, it was a moral issue. In his later statements Rice removed slavery from the jurisdiction of the Church, seeing it a political evil only.

[2] For the text of the memorial, see Records of the Synod of Indiana, Vol. 1 (1826-1845), mimeograph copy, n.p., n.d., pp. 18-29. The memorial surveyed the statements of the General Assembly on the subject of slavery, particularly the 1818 action, and urged the Assembly "to adopt such measures as in your wisdom may appear best calculated to effect a speedy and entire abolition of slavery within the bounds of the Presbyterian Church." (P. 25). The General Assembly minutes do not indicate that any action was taken on the memorial.

passed unnoticed in the South, with the exception of the Presbytery of Orange. The Presbytery's resolution is of interest not only because it indicates a shift in Southern opinion on slavery, but because it demonstrated a refusal to consider any solution to the question of the Church's relation to slavery, except for silence.

> Resolved that the Presbytery of Orange deeply lament that their brethren of the Synod of Indiana are not satisfied with their own exemption from the evil of slavery; that while it shall be for a lamentation that any of the human family are held in a state of slavery, it ought never to be forgotten that slavery is an entailed evil; that slaves are private property; that the manner in which they are held is to be determined by civil, & not by ecclesiastical authority; that the subject of slavery is not understood except by those who live in slave-holding states; and finally, that the Presbytery express to the General Assembly their ardent wishes that the memorialists be affectionately yet firmly requested to desist from their interference with the general peace and prosperity of the Presbyterian Church in the Southern States, as affected by the subject of slavery.[1]

The resolution shows a similar viewpoint--except for the initial sarcasm--with the statements of Rice a year earlier. Slavery is acknowledged as an evil, but outside interference is condemned, especially from an ecclesiastical source. The matter is not within the province of the Church, and agitation within the Church will only result in strife.

There was still a reservoir of anti-slavery sentiment among Presbyterians in Virginia and North Carolina, however, although

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Orange, MS, Volume for 1827-1830, pp. 74-75 (April, 1828). The Presbytery of Orange was in North Carolina. The resolution was also published--almost a year later--in The Visitor and Telegraph, January 3, 1829; it can also be found in R. H. Stone, op. cit., p. 88. Our statement indicating that the Indiana memorial passed unnoticed by other presbyteries must be qualified by the observation that full minutes of many Southern judicatories are not extant.

little practical action can be detected. The editor of The Visitor and Telegraph noted favorably the formation of an emancipation society in England which sought emancipation on a world-wide scale; the editor commented that "the abolition of slavery all over the world...ought not to be deemed chimerical."[1] The editor also took brief notice of the publication of an anti-slavery newspaper by Lundy and Garrison.[2] The Southern Religious Telegraph (which succeeded The Visitor and Telegraph in 1830) likewise noted the work of Garrison in starting The Liberator.[3] The Visitor and Telegraph reprinted the full text of a memorial to the Virginia General Assembly urging the gradual emancipation of slaves, saying that the proposal "is so intimately connected with the growth, prosperity, character and influence of our Commonwealth, that in the view of very many of our fellow citizens, it demands the interference of our legislative counsels."[4]

Attention was also given to the American Colonization Society, and for some, at least, colonization was still to be linked with emancipation. The Visitor and Telegraph urged collections for the Society on July 4, and reprinted a long section from the African Repository which spoke of slavery as "a great national calamity" and saw colonization as a logical remedy.[5] The Synod of Virginia noted that the American Colonization Society, along with

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[1]The Visitor and Telegraph, December 6, 1828.

[2]The Visitor and Telegraph, September 26, 1829. The paper was The Genius of Universal Emancipation.

[3]Southern Religious Telegraph, August 21, 1830; January 15, 1831.

[4]The Visitor and Telegraph, July 25, 1829.

[5]Ibid., June 20, 1829.

other benevolent projects, was backed by all churches.[1] A Presbyterian Church was organized among a group of emigrants for Liberia, and one of the emigrants was ordained as pastor of the Church.[2] The Synod later sought to raise funds for a school in Liberia.[3] William Hill, a leading minister in the Valley of Virginia, was a strong advocate of colonization, and likewise expressed a desire that some plan of gradual emancipation be adopted by the State.[4] The Visitor and Telegraph and the Southern Religious Telegraph took frequent notice of the colonization movement and the state of the Liberian colony.

SLAVERY: THE MOVEMENT TOWARD CONSENSUS

The initial impulse for a shift on slavery came mainly from ecclesiastical sources; the impulse for a movement toward consensus came mainly from secular events. In 1831 three events occurred which had wide repercussions, especially in the Virginia

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[1] "Narrative of the State of Religion in the Synod of Virginia", The Visitor and Telegraph, November 13, 1828.

[2] The Visitor and Telegraph, February 21, 1829. The pastor soon died, but another man took his place; the Church was small and seems to have had a precarious existence. It was considered part of East Hanover Presbytery. Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, MS, Vol. 1 (October, 1830), pp. 39-40. See also letters from the Church in Liberia, The Visitor and Telegraph, November 7, 1829; Southern Religious Telegraph, October 16, 1830.

[3] The Visitor and Telegraph, November 7, 1829; Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, MS, Vol. 1, pp. 39-40 (October, 1830; Vol. 1, p. 46 (April, 1831); Vol. 1, pp. 144-145 (April, 1833). The April, 1831, reference shows that money for the school was collected for the Presbytery by the Virginia Colonization Society. See also letters concerning the proposed school in Southern Religious Telegraph, May 15, August 28, and December 11, 1830. The school was eventually completed.

[4] "Dr. Hill's Discourse on the Fourth of July", The Visitor and Telegraph, August 1, 1829.

area. First came the increasingly violent attacks on slavery by abolitionists, led by William Lloyd Garrison's The Liberator, which began publication January 1, 1831. The second event was the insurrection led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, in which almost sixty whites were killed. The last event was the debate on the abolition of slavery which occurred in the Virginia House of Delegates during the winter of 1831-1832. These events were to mark a turning point in the attitude toward slavery generally in the upper South; they likewise would influence Presbyterians in Virginia and North Carolina to move toward a pro-slavery position.

A hint of the reaction of Southern Presbyterians to abolitionist activities can be detected a year before Garrison began publication. Amasa Converse, editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph, suddenly found himself accused of passing inflammatory literature to slaves which urged them to rebel. The charge was vehemently denied by him, and Converse emphasized that in his view slavery was a civil matter only, and he opposed all "foreign" interference in the matter.[1] The sharpness of his reaction to the charge indicates well the extreme sensitivity of all Southern Presbyterians to any charge of sympathy with such violent measures.

The worst fears of the South concerning insurrection were realized in the Nat Turner rebellion in August, 1831. "Never has it fallen to our lot to record so melancholy a tale connected with the history of our State" reported Amasa Converse, who termed the insurrectionists "deluded wretches."[2] Converse gave full coverage

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, February 27, 1830. See also March 27, 1830. The work was almost certainly Walker's Appeal, which appeared in the South shortly after its publication in Boston in September, 1829. See Charles Sydnor, The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948.) pp. 222-224.

[2] Ibid., September 2, 1831.

to the capture and trial of Turner and his associates.[1]

The exact effect of the Turner rebellion on Southern Presbyterians is difficult to weigh. Only one judicatory took notice of the rise in abolition sentiment in the North; its resolutions, adopted in October were probably influenced by the Turner insurrection two months earlier.[2] One significant effect can be detected, however, in attitudes toward colonization. For several years the colonization cause had been languishing, but one immediate effect of the insurrection was a renewed interest in the subject. It was, however, directed almost exclusively at the colonization of free blacks; many, especially in the area near the scene of the insurrection, found that emigration was better than enduring the renewed suspicion of the white population. Presbyterians, often active in the colonization cause in Virginia, seized the opportunity. William

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[1] See Ibid., August 26, September 2, September 9, September 16, September 23, September 30, November 4, December 9, 1831.

[2] "The Synod, having learned, that certain incendiary publications, on the subject of slavery, have been circulated within their bounds, adopted the following resolutions; viz, Resolved, 1. That, while this Synod would devoutly pray, that the condition of that unhappy part of our population, referred to in the above-named publications, may be ameliorated; yet, it is the honest conviction of this Synod, that such sentiments as have recently been circulated, through the columns of the 'New York Evangelist', & of the 'Liberator', & by the Walker pamphlet, & other tracts, on the same subject, have a tendency to exasperate the public mind, & may lead to the perpetration of cruelties on helpless women & children, which would make humanity shudder; or, if this be not the result, that the condition of the slave may thereby be rendered more hopeless & miserable.

"2. That, while the Synod would, by no means, discourage free & calm discussion on the subject of slavery; yet, they would discountenance the circulation of all publications of an inflamatory character...." The Synod then adopted a further resolution on religious instruction of slaves. Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Volume for October, 1831, pp. 25-26. The claim of the Synod that it did not wish to discourage discussion is of interest in light of later developments.

Henry Foote, pastor in Romney, Virginia (in the western part of the State), expressed his hopes about the new interest in colonization:

> I hope the late disturbances among the Negroes in some portions of the country may have the influence of helping the Society--I think it will in no small degree.... These insurrections will form a grand subject of appeal.[1]

The American Colonization Society's agent in Norfolk, a Presbyterian, expressed more definitely the new attitude:

> If I had the means myself I would have forthwith chartered a vessel and taken the poor persecuted free people of colour that have applied to me (I write in confidence) to Africa myself.[2]

Henry Ruffner wrote to the American Colonization Society about plans for the emigration of a free black, and gave some indication of the hopes many had for the colonization movement:

> The Board of Managers of the Rockbridge Colonization Society are taking measures to effect the removal of a free coloured man (Robt Allen) with his wife and child from this country to Liberia....
>
> Our motive for desiring to send such an emigrant from this part of the country is that through his report from personal inspection, the fears & suspicions of our coloured people respecting the colonization scheme, may be removed. Should our own coloured people get into the spirit of emigration, much more may be effected in this part of the country than the utmost efforts of its active friends can now achieve.[3]

The Southern Religious Telegraph, by now the only indigenous Presbyterian periodical in Virginia and North Carolina, gave strong support to colonization immediately after the insurrection. Noting the planned emigration of another group to Liberia, the editor

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[1] William Henry Foote to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, September 24, 1831. American Colonization Society Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Hereafter referred to as ACS Papers.

[2] J. McPhail to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, September 30, 1831. ACS Papers.

[3] Henry Ruffner to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, September 16, 1831. ACS Papers.

expressed the hope that the news would become known among free blacks. "An opportunity is now offered them of emigrating to a flourishing colony, where many blessings may be secured to them, which they can never enjoy in this country."[1] Converse further collected funds for the colonization of free blacks.[2] He likewise urged the support of the cause, saying that free blacks from the Southampton area were especially willing to go if funds could be provided.[3] Various issues carried letters from individuals expressing support for the movement.[4]

The renewed enthusiasm was brief, however. William Henry Foote expressed his willingness to travel as an agent for the American Colonization Society, but was pessimistic about the likelihood of many free blacks emigrating:

> Of the free coloured population in Hampshire I do not know of one that is willing to go to Africa--They are a miserable race--fortunately for us there are not many with us....I have a number of coloured members in

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, September 30, 1831.

[2] See letters and acknowledgments in Ibid., October 7, October 21, November 18, 1831.

[3] Virtually every issue from October, 1831, through February, 1832, contained news and comments on colonization. See especially October 21, November 4, December 16, 1831; February 5, 1832.

[4] See, for example, Ibid., October 7, October 14, November 4, November 11, November 25; January 20, February 24, 1832. For other expressions of support from Presbyterians for the colonization movement see John Coulter to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, September 19, 1833; Samuel Wilson to Richard Smith, MS letter, July 16, 1833; W. S. Plumer to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, October 3, 1833. All in ACS Papers.

Explicit approval was also given to the colonization cause by West Hanover Presbytery. Minutes of the Presbytery of West Hanover, MS, Vol. 1 (Oct., 1832), p. 99.

Converse further took favorable notice of a proposal to require by law the migration of all free blacks to Liberia, Southern Religious Telegraph, October 21, 1831.

> my Church (about 50) & only two are free & they are too old.[1]

By the beginning of 1834 public support for the movement had virtually died out. David Burr, the Presbyterian elder who was secretary of the Virginia Colonization Society, declared that interest was lagging; the rise of anti-slavery literature had exasperated the public and was turning them against any movement which could be construed as emancipationist in nature.[2] Dr. William Hill became pastor of the Briery Church (Virginia) in early 1834, but found that his position on colonization made an extended pastorate untenable:

> A principle motive with me in removing to Briery was, to try to ameliorate the state of slavery, especially with those who belonged to Briery & constituted their fund for the support of their minister[3]....I used all prudent exertions to induce the Elders to agree either to liberate them & give them up to the colonization Society to send to Africa; or to let them choose for themselves some humane master & sell them, that they might have some permanent residence which they might call their home. One of the Elders cheerfully agreed to liberate them & send them to Africa, but the Majority were bitterly opposed to making any change.[4] This, fixed my determination to remain there no longer.

The significant thing about the Presbyterian interest in colonization at this time, however, is that attention was almost

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[1] William Henry Foote to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, September 19, 1833. ACS Papers.

[2] D. J. Burr to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, January 27, 1834, ACS Papers.

[3] The slaves were owned by the Church, and hired out to the highest bidders; the funds thus secured were used to pay the minister's salary. The practice was fairly common, but meant that a slave would have no permanent master or residence.

[4] William Hill, Autobiographical Sketches and Other Papers of William Hill of Winchester (Richmond: Union Theological Seminary, Historical Transcripts No. 4, 1968), p. 99.

completely directed at the emigration of blacks who were already free.[1] In other words, Presbyterian interest in colonization--knowingly or unknowingly--moved almost completely away from seeing it as a means of accomplishing the emancipation of the slave. By the end of the flurry of interest in colonization (about 1834) Presbyterian sentiment in Virginia and North Carolina for gradual emancipation linked with colonization was virtually extinct.

In the meantime, however, Presbyterian attention (mainly in Virginia rather than North Carolina) was directed to the debate over slavery in the Virginia House of Delegates, beginning in December, 1831.[2] Of significance was Amasa Converse's approval of a memorial from the Society of Friends which called for the gradual emancipation of the slaves:

> All good men will approve the sentiments and spirit of the following well written memorial--whatever they may think of the practicability of the important object it contemplated.[3]

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[1]Other than Hill's attempt just quoted, we have noted only one example of a Presbyterian desiring to free slaves for emigration during this period. This was Dr. William S. Plumer, pastor at the time of the Presbyterian Church in Petersburg, Virginia, who freed two slaves. See William S. Plumer to Ralph Gurley, MS letter, October 3, 1833, ACS Papers.

[2]The best survey of the course of the debate is Joseph Clarke Robert, The Road From Monticello: A Study of the Virginia Slavery Debate of 1832. (Originally published 1941; reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1970). Robert says, "The Virginia slavery debate of 1832, final and most brilliant of the Southern attempts to abolish slavery, represents the line of demarcation between a public willing to hear the faults of slavery and one intolerant of criticism." p.v. For the results of the debate on the course of slavery sentiment see also W. S. Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 81-89.

[3]Southern Religious Telegraph, December 23, 1831. Robert says this petition marked the opening of debate over the slavery issue and indicated the divergence of opinion in the Legislature. Op. cit., pp. 16-17.

Converse followed the course of the debates closely, and urged the adoption of some plan of emancipation. Noting the fact that such a plan was backed by two leading newspapers, the Whig and the Enquirer, Converse stated that for once he found himself in full agreement with their editorial position:

> They have both recommended the gradual abolition of slavery--the greatest evil, as admitted by all, that has ever existed in our country. In the expression of their views on this difficult--this intensely interesting question, they have spoken, as we verily believe, most important truth, influenced only by that patriotism which seeks to promote the great interests and prosperity of our Commonwealth, reckless of the effect which their course might produce on their own private interests. In this course, we doubt not, they will be ably sustained by the enlightened community....[1]

At the conclusion of the debate in late January, Converse expressed regret at the failure of the House of Delegates to take action on slavery, and expressed the hope that action would be taken at the next session.

The denominational affiliation of those participating in the debate is not known; it is, however, of interest that at least one Presbyterian played a significant part in the debate, uniformly taking an anti-slavery position. James McDowell, a nephew of the Governor (who would himself be Governor later), was a legislator from Rockbridge County, in the Valley of Virginia. He had become a devout Presbyterian only six months or so before coming to the legislature. In the course of the debate McDowell acknowledged that some evidence could be presented from Scripture which would seemingly support slavery, but such was "powerfully

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[1]Southern Religious Telegraph, January 20, 1832.

rebuted, by the fact of man's original equality of rights; equality of responsibility as a moral agent; and by the great canon of the divine law, which enjoins upon all to perform to others the duties which we exact for ourselves."[1] Robert suggests that McDowell, with William B. Preston (another nephew of the Governor), "provided a nucleus around which liberal legislators gathered."[2]

The end of the debate in the House of Delegates did not mark the end of anti-slavery feeling among Presbyterians. It did, however, suggest that the goal of gradual emancipation was distant at best. Nevertheless, the Southern Religious Telegraph continued to contend that some scheme of emancipation was both possible and necessary.[3] The paper likewise took sharp issue with the pro-slavery sentiments of Thomas Roderick Dew, whose Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832 had wide influence.[4] James McDowell and Thomas Gilmer, both Presbyterians, led the fight to have the 1833 legislature adopt a plan of colonization; their efforts, however, were to no avail.[5]

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[1]Quoted in Sally Campbell Preston Miller, "Sketch of the Trustees of Washington College--James McDowell," Washington and Lee University Historical Papers, No. 5 (Baltimore, John Murphy & Co., 1895), p. 90. The entire article on McDowell is of interest in tracing his career as a politician. See also DAB, Vol. 12, pp. 30-31.

[2]J. C. Robert, op. cit., p. 18.

[3]"And it ought to be known by every citizen of our State, that its removal is practicable; it may be effected." Southern Religious Telegraph, February 15, 1833. The editor suggested that emancipation linked with colonization was still the most feasible plan.

[4]Ibid., January 4, 1833. Dew presented Biblical arguments to defend his position. Converse said such a position was indefensible: "By the same species of argument, he might prove that Polygamy, Divorce for slight causes, and other crimes, were 'established and sanctioned by Divine authority, even among the elect of Heaven!'..."

[5]Ibid., February 15, 1833. On Gilmer (who, like McDowell, later became Governor of Virginia) see DAB, Vol. 7, pp. 308-309.

In examining the reaction of Presbyterians in Virginia and North Carolina to the events of the early 1830's, therefore, a somewhat contradictory picture emerges. On one hand, it would appear that anti-slavery sentiment reached an intense level, due to a renewed awareness of the potential dangers inherent in the slavery system. Thus Presbyterians backed the new interest in colonization, and followed eagerly the debate in the Virginia House of Delegates concerning slavery. On the other hand, there are strong indications that a transition on attitudes toward slavery was already under way. Indeed, if this were not the case the sharp affirmation of a pro-slavery position only a few years later becomes almost inexplicable.

The key to understanding this complex period is to notice the precise nature of the shifts in position on two issues. First, the period demonstrates clearly that Presbyterians had shifted their position on the question of the nature of the evil of slavery. Whereas formerly many had seen slavery as a moral issue within the jurisdiction of the Church, now slavery is seen primarily as a civil issue, and thus beyond the jurisdiction of the Church.[1] Thus, the question of eliminating slavery became a question of political expediency. To say that Presbyterians had

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[1]The opinion is not unanimous, however. For example, a letter to the Southern Religious Telegraph argued against the intervention of the Church in the matter of slavery, giving nine reasons why the question was beyond the Church's jurisdiction. Southern Religious Telegraph, November 29, 1833. A long letter in reply ["Answer of Berea to the Queries of Percunctator"] answered the previous letter point by point, contending that the matter was certainly a moral issue of concern to Christians. The editor noted in introducing the letter that the first letter had "given dissatisfaction to some extent among our subscribers," but said that it would be inexpedient to continue the discussion in his columns. December 13, 1833.

anti-slavery sentiments, therefore, is not sufficient; the reasons for the sentiments must be seen. By the time of the slavery debate in Virginia the position of most anti-slavery Presbyterians was probably little different from that of most citizens who felt the State would be better off without the black population.

The second shift in position was on the colonization question. Formerly colonization had been seen as a means of securing emancipation. In the early 1830's two things need to be noted. First, as we have indicated, the goal of colonization shifted to the removal of the free black population. Second, however, colonization was reaffirmed as a means of solving the emancipation question, particularly during the legislative debate over slavery. At first these two positions seem contradictory, but a distinction must be kept in mind. The shift in emphasis toward the removal of the free black population was essentially on a personal level. The view of colonization as a means of emancipation, on the other hand, was on a public or governmental level. In other words, by this time it was acknowledged that colonization would never be the answer to the slavery problem, as long as it was attempted only by private citizens.

It will now be evident why the early 1830's can be termed as a period in which there was a "movement toward consensus" on the part of Presbyterians in Virginia and North Carolina. First, an examination of the reason why Presbyterians took the positions they did during the period shows a shift in motives, and a movement toward consensus on these motives. Second, it will now be seen that the important period of time was that immediately after the slavery debate in Virginia. It is important to note that very

little discussion on slavery took place among Presbyterians after the end of the slavery debate; only the colonization of free blacks continued to draw some attention. The reason is that a consensus of opinion had now emerged, which was little different from the view of society generally. Given the two shifts of position on the proper relationship of the Church to slavery and on colonization, it is evident why a consensus developed. If slavery was a civil matter, and the civil authorities had refused to take steps to eliminate it (whether through colonization or some other scheme), then the matter was closed. Many might regret the decision of the civil authority, but the Presbyterian understanding of the division between Church and State meant that ecclesiastical interference was unwarranted. Private efforts to eliminate slavery through colonization had proven untenable; the refusal of the State to adopt the scheme closed the door on the only safe way of emancipation that was envisioned. With the death of colonization, Southern Presbyterians saw themselves left with only one practical solution: the acceptance of slavery as a part of the social order. Since the theoretical question concerning the nature of the Church's relation to slavery had now been settled, there was little reluctance to adopt this solution.

SLAVERY: THE END OF DIVERSITY

As was true in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, the end of diversity on the slavery question in the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina was closely related to the ecclesiastical controversies culminating in the division of the Presbyterian Church.

The threat of agitation on the slavery question in the

1835 General Assembly brought an immediate response. Noting one petition which was to be presented to the Assembly and signed by several thousand women, Amasa Converse stated,

> These good ladies, we apprehend, have been ill advised in respect to the powers of the Assembly, or the purposes of its organization. Legislation on the subject of slavery, is not, in our view, one of these purposes--and we confidently trust that the Assembly without manifesting any want of christian charity to their numerous memorialists, will refuse to interfere with this subject....[1]

At the Assembly itself Southerners discovered that slavery agitation was very much a threat. The day after the Assembly opened Alexander Wilson, a commissioner from North Carolina, wrote to his wife that

> We have thus far had a prospect of a protracted session and much strife....I have had enough of it already, they who know least of the turmoils & perplexities of political or ecclesiastical discussions are best off....[2]

A few days later Wilson saw more clearly the nature of the turmoil that threatened the Assembly.

> The subject of slavery & several other exciting questions will yet be before the Assembly, and I fear the results--Mr. Weld who was in Williamsboro at our house some years ago, is here, and is to commence lecturing on Slavery next week--I have seen very few in favour of abolition.[3]

Wilson, expressing deep homesickness, left the Assembly before the matter came up for final discussion.[4]

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, June 5, 1835.

[2] Alexander Wilson (Pittsburgh) to Mary Wilson (Granville County, N. C.), MS letter, May 22, 1835. Heartt-Wilson Papers, University of North Carolina.

[3] Ibid., May 27, 1835.

[4] Ibid., May 30, 1835. The slavery issue had been committed to a committee on May 26; the committee reported on June 5, and the entire issue was referred to another committee to report at the next Assembly. GA Minutes, Vol. 2 (1835), pp. 472, 482.

The appointment of a committee by the Assembly to investigate the slavery question prompted action on the part of various judicatories. With the exception of the resolutions passed by the Synod of North Carolina in 1831,[1] no judicatory had taken official notice of the rising tide of abolitionist sentiment in the North.[2] Suddenly, however, abolition became a major issue; the reason was clearly the threat of agitation in the General Assembly. Typical was the statement adopted by Lexington Presbytery:

> Resolved unanimously, that this Presby view with deep concern and decided disapprobation the course of the Abolitionists at the North as an officious and obtrusive intermeddling with the concerns of others; as tending directly and inevitably to the disunion of these United States, as hazarding the peace and even the lives of the citizens of the Southern States; and as increasing the evils which it is their professed object to remove.[3]

A similar resolution from East Hanover Presbytery termed abolitionism "unscriptural & cruel".[4] A long series of resolutions from Winchester Presbytery spoke more explicitly of the nature of abolition, saying that

> ...this interference with the civil condition of the Slave in the Slaveholding States, is, in our opinion a palpable violation of their constitutional rights, a manifest departure from the example of our divine

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[1] Supra, p. 154.

[2] This was not true of the Southern Religious Telegraph, however. Converse took frequent notice of abolitionist activities; while not as rabid in his anti-abolitionist statements as the South Carolina periodicals, he made it clear that he had no sympathy with their viewpoint. For major articles and editorials on abolitionism see November 16, 1832; April 12, 1833; February 7, February 28, July 18, August 15, 1834.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, MS, Vol. 10 (October, 1835), p. 91.

[4] Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, MS, Vol. 2 (October, 1835), p. 11.

> Redeemer and his Apostles, in similar circumstances and tends to render the condition of the Slave far less comfortable than it was before, and put in jeopardy the peace and welfare of the whole country....[1]

The Presbytery then passed a motion requesting the public papers to publish their resolutions.[2]

Partly as a response to the resolutions from East Hanover and Winchester Presbyteries, the Synod of Virginia likewise condemned abolitionism. Going beyond the emotional rhetoric of the resolutions from the Presbytery level, the Synod statement sought to delineate the exact stance the Church should assume in regard to slavery. Noting that the anti-slavery agitation was "greatly disturbing the peace of the Church and of the Country", the Synod stated,

> 1. Resolved, unanimously that we consider the dogma so fiercely promulgated by the said Associations, that Slavery as it actually exists in our Slave holding States is necessarily sinful and ought to be immediately abolished, and the conclusions which naturally follow from that dogma is directly and palpably contrary to the plainest principles of common sense and common humanity and to the clearest authority of the Word of God.
> 2. Resolved, unanimously that in the deliberate judgment of the Synod it is the duty of all Ministers of the gospel to follow the examples of our Lord and Saviour and of his Apostles in similar circumstances, in abstaining from all interference with the State of Slavery as established amongst us by the laws of our Commonwealth and conforming themselves strictly to their proper province of inculcating upon Masters and Slaves the duties enjoined upon them respectfully [respectively] in the sacred scriptures which must tend immediately to promote the welfare of both, and ultimately to restore the whole world to that state of holy happiness which is the earnest desire of every Christian heart.[3]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Winchester, MS, Vol. 6, (October, 1835), p. 116.

[2] Ibid., p. 117.

[3] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 6 (October, 1835),

This important statement would set the pattern for all later considerations of slavery in this period. It made explicit the view that slavery was not a moral evil, and likewise set forth clearly the position that the Church must in no way interfere with slavery.

In North Carolina the first statements on abolition came from the Synod rather than the Presbyteries. Three brief but strongly worded resolutions condemned abolitionist activities; no mention was made of the agitation of the issue in the Church, although one resolution noted "That this Synod does solemnly repudiate & disclaim sympathy & co-operation with Abolitionists, wherever they may exist."[1] The last phrase would presumably include the General Assembly.

As the time for the General Assembly of 1836 came closer, Presbyterians in the two Synods began to doubt if general resolutions on abolition were sufficient to ward off discussion in the Assembly. The Southern Religious Telegraph was optimistic that slavery would not cause conflict in the Assembly, but Converse's optimism was not shared by most in the Synods.[2] In North Carolina,

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pp. 138-139. It is worth noting that slight reference is made to agitation within the Church; the three Presbytery memorials made no mention of this.

Sermons of the period seldom took note of anything other than doctrinal issues. One exception was a sermon by Francis McFarland on colonization. Preaching on Onesimus and Philemon, McFarland noted that "for men to become Christians does not make any change in their Political State." "Sermon on Colonization", July 5, 1835. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat. The manuscript is a sermon note only; the statement concerning the political status of slaves was one of the five major points in the sermon, and was presumably expanded greatly in the preached version.

[1] Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Volume for October, 1835, p. 12.

[2] Southern Religious Telegraph, April 1, 1836.

Orange Presbytery noted that the Assembly's committee on slavery would report at the next meeting, and stated,

> ...Whereas this Presbytery regard the institution of slavery as one falling exclusively under the jurisdiction of the civil authority and in no wise cognizable by an ecclesiastical tribunal:
>
> Therefore, Resolved That we will hold any action on the slave question by the General Assembly as an unwise interference, with a matter the controul [sic] of which pertains to the constituted authorities of the respective states, by whose laws it is recognised and whose citizens are the only proper judges of their own concerns.[1]

Another North Carolina Presbytery, Fayetteville, went beyond the Orange Presbytery resolutions, and issued explicit instructions to its commissioners to the Assembly on the course they were to follow in the event the slavery issue was presented. They were told to make every effort to consult with other Southern commissioners to plan united action, and "to endeavor to prevent all discussion on the main question." In order to do this, they were to object to the reading of the slavery committee's report, but if they failed on this they were to see

> that the issue be joined upon the point of entire abstinance from the subject, on the part of the General Assembly. And that your farther presence with them depends on that point.
>
> In all this, we ask you to give no opinion for yourselves, or for us, as to the moral lawfulness of slavery. But to proceed upon the ground that it is a local, and not a general question; that it is civil rather than ecclesiastical; and, especially, that the course of southern churches, in regard to slavery, and all action in the case must be left to themselves.[2]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Orange, MS, April, 1836, pp. 233-234. The volume number is uncertain owing to the loss of some earlier volumes.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Fayetteville, MS, Vol. 1 (April, 1836), p. 343. The refusal of the Presbytery to deny explicitly the sinfulness of slavery indicates there were some who still looked on slavery as a moral issue.

The Presbytery also laid on the table the letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe, Ohio, on slavery and declined to continue correspondence on the issue.[1]

In Virginia similar action was taken by several Presbyteries. West Hanover Presbytery resolved that the General Assembly had no jurisdiction over the issue, and instructed its commissioners to meet with other Southern delegates. They were further directed to "express their determination to submit to no jurisdiction of the Assembly on that subject, by withdrawing from the Assembly in a body whenever, in their views, such jurisdiction shall have been assumed."[2] Lexington Presbytery, which had already taken action at its previous meeting, gave less explicit directions to its commissioners, saying simply that they were "to adopt such measures, as any emergency may demand.[3] The Presbytery also adopted

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of West Hanover, MS, Vol. 1 (April, 1836), p. 243.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, MS, Vol. 10, (April, 1836), p. 122. Insight on the attitude of some Southern Presbyterians is given by an incident in Lexington Presbytery. Dr. Francis McFarland, a member of the Presbytery but secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Education in Philadelphia, was appointed commissioner from the Presbytery to the 1836 Assembly. The appointment was reaffirmed, but not after some had voiced opposition. "I will now mention to you, because you ask it a matter which...I had hoped you would never hear. I refer to the opposition that was made to reappointing you our representative in the next general Assembly....The moderator then placed another member in the chair and made a long speech against your appointment. The heads of his argument as nigh as I can recollect were the following 1 That now you were only nominally a member of our Presbytery. 2 That your office would prevent you from expressing your views freely on the absorbing questions that would come up, you would be afraid of offending one or other of the positions, and therefore could not do your duties in that fearless and faithful manner that the circumstances demanded. 3 That you were not a native subject of the South--had never owned a slave--and that therefore on this subject so deeply intruding at this time you could not fairly represent this Presbytery....I endeavoured

the report of a committee which had been formed to examine the letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe; the resolution declared "that it is inexpedient to lay the letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe before this Presby or take any further notice of it."[1] The Presbytery of Winchester returned the Chillicothe letter to that Presbytery, saying that the "Presbytery cannot entertain any such document as that sent to us by the Presbytery of Chillicothe."[2] The Presbytery issued no formal instructions to its Assembly commissioners, but "went into a committee of the whole, & held a free conversation on the now agitating question of immediate abolition."[3]

The Southern Religious Telegraph echoed the demand that slavery should not be discussed in the Assembly. In a long editorial (written partly as an answer to criticism of the Telegraph's position by a Buffalo, New York, paper), Amasa Converse set forth his reasons for urging silence in the Assembly on slavery. Such dis-

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to show and I think did show that on the very grounds of their objections you ought to be appointed, that you could & would do more for the south than any man we could appoint....it was voted unanimously that we would not reconsider." James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 11, 1836. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[1] Ibid., p. 121.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Winchester, MS, Vol. 7 (April, 1836), p. 149. The Stated Clerk of Winchester Presbytery, William Henry Foote, attached a personal note to the document in returning it to Chillicothe Presbytery, which showed the feeling many Southern Presbyterians had about Northern ecclesiastical interference. "P.S. By way of query: Has the black man a home in Ohio, by law? Has he not been driven off, though free? Look at these things, my brethren. If Ohio cannot endure a fraction, how could the South, the whole mass of free colored men? The Presbytery feels no bitterness against their brethren in Ohio, who, while they seem to stand up for the black man, drive him from the Lord's table, by driving him from the country. Southern men belong to the same church with their servants, and commune at the same occasions. Let Ohio wash her own hands, before she cries out against the spec | sic she sees upon her neighbor's." Quoted by R. C. Galbraith, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of Winchester, MS, Vol. 7 (April, 1836), p. 138.

cussion was unwarranted first of all because the North had no understanding of the question; only Southerners could deal with the problem. A second reason was that such discussion was discourteous, since it was an intrusion into a domestic matter. Other reasons included the contention that such discussion was injurious to the slaves, and plans of emancipation, if carried out, would even lead to the destruction of the slaves. Finally, discussion on slavery in the Assembly was wrong because it was based on a false premise, namely, that slavery was unscriptural and morally sinful. "The principles of SOUND CHRISTIAN EXPEDIENCY, in our view, require our friends in the non-slaveholding states to abstain from it."[1]

In light of this, it is at first glance curious that the reaction of Presbyterians in the two Synods to the 1836 General Assembly was one of disappointment, and even anxiety. The decision to postpone discussion indefinitely was close to the Southern position of avoiding discussion on the issue, but it was immediately recognised that postponement was a two-edged sword. A commissioner from North Carolina, hoping to raise funds in the North for Caldwell Institute in Greensborough, found great discontent:

> This seems to be a very unfavourable time for making an effort in the North to raise money for our institution. The churches are exceedingly agitated by the controversies between old and new school, abolitionists and anti-abolitionists &c and especially by the proceedings of the Assembly.[2]

In the South, however, the discontent centered more exclusively on the slavery issue. A report from a Virginia commissioner

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, April 29, 1836.

[2] Eli W. Caruthers to Alexander Wilson, MS letter, June 11, 1836, Heartt-Wilson Papers, University of North Carolina.

in the Assembly expressed this discontent:

> The South did what they could to get a fair vote on the question whether the church has a right to interfere with the existence of slavery. And here we had the singular fact of the South voting with the few thorough going abolitionists on the floor. But the moderate men prevailed to postpone the whole subject.... It does not indeed place this matter on the ground that the South would desire, yet I thought it was better than nothing....I am persuaded that we have much less to fear in this matter from the old school than from the new school party.[1]

Another commissioner expressed less optimism; his letter is especially significant because it indicates the sudden emergence of serious discussion about the future of the Southern Church.

> On the slavery question the Assembly did all that they could do, as conscientious men. That is not the body of men to settle this matter. Nor need the south ever look for peace or rest from any of its decisions on this point--And it now becomes a grave and serious question whether the southern section of our church will any more, or again expose its representatives to the scoffs and taunts and jeers and misrepresentations and excommunications and maledictions, of the abolitionists, both male, and female.[2]

A more detailed view of the Assembly action and the future of the Southern Church was given by James Morrison:

> As to the Slavery question I am sorry the southern substitute had not either been adopted or rejected. This would at once have been decisive. As it is, the way is still open for strife & contention--and bitterness--It is only putting off the evil day a little. It must come....If however division must come, and I fear it must, then I think it will be expedient for the Potomack & Ohio to be the line. If we divide on any other principle then the southern churches will divide....In the southern church I think there is no necessity for division and very great for union. Moreover if we could be united and all or no doubt

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, June 24, 1836. The correspondent is unidentified. Converse appended a note saying he had received another letter which contended that the main abolitionist strength was in the Old School.

[2] Ibid., Again the correspondent is not named, although he indicates he was from North Carolina.

> the majority would be united with the old school party--still we would have the same continual worrying on the slavery question that we do now. A number of the old school are as fanatical abolitionists as any of the new school. Thus if we must divide let the south be united by themselves.[1]

A few weeks later Morrison expressed his conviction that "our church ought not to divide" but again affirmed that "If division must come much as we deprecate it I think it will be a geographical one."[2] The basic issues, he felt, were doctrine and polity, neither of which justified division.

It was clear, however, that not all Presbyterians in the two Synods agreed with Morrison's position. To many, doctrinal deviation was a serious matter which by itself would justify a division. In the period between the 1836 and 1837 Assemblies, therefore, the issue became somewhat confused, particularly in Virginia. To a much greater degree than the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, the Synod of Virginia was split over the Old School-New School controversy. Many men, particularly in West Hanover Presbytery and in some sections of the Valley of Virginia, had been educated in the North and still had strong ties with that section. It is doubtful if there was any pronounced doctrinal difference between such men and the rest of the Synod; it is difficult to resist the impression that such intangible factors as background and personality were more important than theological considerations. However that may be, there was no practical difference in their attitude toward slavery by this time; almost without ex-

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[1] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 8, 1836. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat. Hereafter referred to as McFarland Papers.

[2] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, September 1, 1836. McFarland Papers.

ception pro-slavery thought had become prevalent. The question instead was what the reaction of Southern Presbyterians should be to the agitation of the slavery issue in the General Assembly.

As in the case of Charleston Union Presbytery in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, those in Virginia who opposed a strict Old School position tended to call for a geographical division of the Church. Typical of this position were two resolutions presented to West Hanover Presbytery:

> Resolved, that until the General Assembly shall, by solemn act disclaim all right & authority to interfere with the relation between Master & Slave, this Pbty will not send Commissioners to said Assembly.
>
> Resolved, that unless the General Assembly shall make this disclaimer at the next sessions in Philadelphia, W. H. Pbty. will, at its next fall meeting, invite a conference of the Southern Presbyteries, with a view to the formation of an Exclusively Southern Ecclesiastical Union.[1]

The majority of the Presbytery, however, succeeded in placing the motion on the table until the next meeting of the Presbytery.

A few weeks later the Synod of Virginia gave full consideration to the issues affecting the Church. An extended minute spoke in detail of the doctrinal deviations within the Church, and expressed disapproval of them. It is of interest to note, however, that abolition was the first issue discussed. In a long resolution the Synod decried the agitation of the slavery issue, and set forth a comprehensive defense of slavery. Appealing to the Bible for support, the Synod claimed that "the inspired Apostles had the subject of slavery fully before them, and they gave direc-

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of West Hanover, MS, Vol. 1 (October, 1836), pp. 259-260. The proposed resolutions were presented by a ruling elder, George Payne. At the next meeting of the Presbytery in March, 1837, the matter was again postponed; it was never taken up again.

tions without any appearance of reserve for the mutual duties of the relation [between master and slave]."[1] On the other hand, the spirit of abolition was radically opposed to the teaching of Scripture.[2]

> Therefore the Synod solemnly affirm that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church have no right to declare that relation sinful, which Christ and his Apostles teach to be consistent with the most unquestionable piety....Lest the sentiments just expressed should be misunderstood, Synod would add that the likelihood of the necessity of any geographical division through the operation of this fanaticism is not so great as it was some time ago. Yet, on this subject be the danger so small or great, a vigilance corresponding to the exigencies of the times, is our manifest duty.[3]

The Synod's optimism that sentiment for a geographical division had decreased is difficult to assess; it is clear, however, that many in the Synod still felt a geographical division might be necessary. John Hendren, a commissioner to the 1837 Assembly from Lexington Presbytery indicated that he had little information on the various issues, but felt that abolition could easily bring about a geographical division.

> If a Division of the Church can consistently and with a good conscience be avoided let it not take place. Let this be a thing of ultimate resort. As it respects that part of the Church in the southern States, the subject of abolition alone may separate it from the Churches in the North and non-slaveholding States. The effects of abolition measures may in the south, if these measures should become popular and extensive, be most horrible and distressing--I hope that a scheme so hostile to the peace and safety of Millions will not become extensively popular in the North and East.[4]

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 6 (1836), p. 174.

[2] Ibid., pp. 174-175.

[3] Ibid., pp. 175-176. The entire minute on the issues in the Assembly will be found on pp. 173-181.

[4] John Hendren to Francis McFarland, MS letter, February 7, 1837. McFarland Papers.

James Morrison, also a commissioner from Lexington Presbytery, was likewise reluctant to see a division of the Church.

> I believe we ought not to divide, but if division must come the more I think on the subject I am confirmed in the opinion I have long held that the south had better go by itself. It must come to this. The Spirit of abolitionism I suppose was never more rampant than at this time. I thought from what we heard at Synod last fall that it was probably on the wane but facts which have since transpired have led me to change my opinion. Moreover it marks old school as well as new. The most fanatical abolitionism that I have seen was the doings of the Old School Synod of Cincinnati, at their last meeting.[1]

Some idea of the confusion that many felt over the issues in the Church can be gained by noting that Morrison refused to attend the pre-Assembly convention called by the Old School, in spite of the instructions of his Presbytery; the Presbytery refused to accept his offer of resignation, however. Hendren, on the other hand, was in favor of the Convention.[2] After the April, 1837, meeting of Lexington Presbytery, Morrison indicated again the sentiment of many for a geographical division:

> I am greatly pleased with one thing that came out in our discussion about conventions, and that was this that with but one exception (Preston) all who gave their opinions were in favor of a geographical division, if division must come. This so far as I know is almost the unanimous opinion of the Synod of Virginia. It is thus very certain that if division must come Virginia at least withdraws from the North & West.[3]

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[1] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, February 8, 1837. McFarland Papers.

[2] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 5, 1837. McFarland Papers.

[3] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 5, 1837. McFarland Papers. For another indication of concern from Virginia over abolition in the Assembly see Samuel Miller to John McElhenny, April 15, 1837. Quoted in Samuel Miller, op. cit., p. 235 (Part Three). McElhenny had apparently written Miller for advice concerning the issues facing the Assembly, and had expressed a special concern over the slavery issue.

In North Carolina there were similar expressions of concern. The Synod of North Carolina took note of the controversial issues in doctrine and polity, and adopted five resolutions which implicitly condemned the New School position. A sixth resolution condemned abolitionism as being foreign to the spirit of the Gospel, partly because it condemned slaveholding as a sinful relationship. The resolution further warned that:

> Whenever the General Assembly shall make slaveholding a test of Christian communion, we shall feel it our duty, according to the letter and spirit of the Apostolic injunction, (I Tim. vi, 1-5) to 'withdraw' ourselves.[1]

Whether or not the Synod envisioned the establishment of a separate Southern Church is difficult to say from the available evidence; in view of the close relationship between the Synod and the Synod of Virginia it is reasonable to expect that their views were similar.

The pre-Assembly convention called by the Old School was greatly influenced by the presence of several strong leaders from the Synod of Virginia. Chairman of the convention was Dr. George A. Baxter, successor of John Holt Rice as professor of theology in Union Theological Seminary. Inevitably the question of slavery came up for discussion. Baxter's position on slavery was presumably known to everyone, since he had published a work on the subject in 1836.[2] In the course of dis-

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Volume for 1836, p. 20. The Presbytery of Fayetteville adopted a series of identical resolutions a few weeks later. Minutes of the Presbytery of Fayetteville, Vol. 3 (November, 1836), p. 368.

[2] George Baxter, An Essay on the Abolition of Slavery, (Richmond: T. W. White, 1836). It was apparently the earliest systematic defense of slavery from a Virginia Presbyterian. It is a careful analysis of the slavery problem which demonstrates well the relationship between Southern Presbyterian views of society and views of slavery. Baxter contended that the stability of society must be maintained, and that the abolition of slavery in the immediate future would lead to social disintegration. He admitted that great evil had been done in introducing slavery into America, "but when the system is once introduced, and cannot be broken up without the ruin of the community, and of the slaves themselves, it will certainly justify its continuance, until suitable remedies can be applied." (p. 12).

cussions about what matters should be brought before the convention for action, William S. Plumer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Richmond,

> read a paper containing seventeen propositions to enforce the principle--that slavery being a political institution, its existence was not a proper subject of ecclesiastical interference, either as to its duration or extent; and, therefore, discussion in Convention could produce no good.[1]

In an important address at Union Seminary reviewing the action of the 1837 Assembly, Baxter gave some indication of the attitude within the pre-Assembly convention on the question of slavery.

> I always had the impression that the abolition spirit must be principally in the New School,...I found our northern friends reasonable and prudent on the subject of slavery; and we conversed about it in the style of former times, before the fanaticism of abolition had infected the public mind. In the Convention there were 124 members...and among these, there were but two abolitionists. They were from the Presbytery of Chillicothe, and professed to be very moderate.[2]

The final memorial of the convention to the General Assembly made no mention of slavery.[3]

He further stressed that the abolitionist contention that slavery was always sinful was wrong; it would instead be sinful for slaves to be emancipated. "...if a scheme of emancipation would be greatly injurious to the slaves, the duty of the master would forbid such a scheme." (p. 5). It is of interest that Baxter felt slavery would eventually be abolished because of the superiority of free labor, and the influence of Christianity. He saw the systematic religious instruction of the slaves as the primary means of preparing them for freedom. Unlike many in the South, Baxter further contended that the white and black races could live together harmoniously in the United States after the removal of slavery, provided the black population had been adequately prepared for freedom. (p. 17).

[1]Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 513.

[2]"Dr. Baxter's Address," Southern Religious Telegraph, July 7, 1837. By this time Converse had taken a New School position, and he sharply rejected Baxter's contention that abolitionism was confined primarily to the New School.

[3]Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 520. It was William Henry Foote's judgment that "The moderation of the memorial, on many subjects, was undoubtedly owing to the necessity of having the Southern vote, both in Convention and in the Assembly."

The 1837 General Assembly's actions met with considerable controversy in the Synod of Virginia. The Southern Religious Telegraph, which had made a determined effort to remain neutral as the controversy had developed, declared itself against the Old School position.[1] William S. Plumer began plans immediately to start a competitive paper; "We have now no longer any pleas for not starting another paper. All are loud in their demands for it. We must have it."[2] James Morrison said, "Converse you see is of [off] the fence and he will do much mischief. His is the only nominally Presbyterian paper in Virginia....His paper has nearly ceased to circulate amongst my people."[3] By the end of August Plumer was able to publish his first issue of the Watchman of the South. Converse lost about one-fourth of his subscribers, including almost all those in North Carolina. He ceased publication with the January 9, 1839, issue, and moved to Philadelphia as editor of the Christian Observer.[4]

While there was strong disagreement about the various actions of the Assembly, there was no disagreement about the issue of slavery. Converse, at one time comparatively moderate on the

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, June 30, 1837. Cf. the comment of William Henry Foote: "I hear today that Mr Converse cannot in conscience defend the doings of the Assembly--but says he is willing to be pliant &c--So that probably there will be a war in the South unless he can be prevailed upon to sell out his paper--" William Henry Foote to Francis McFarland, MS letter, June 22, 1837. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2] William S. Plumer to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 8, 1837, Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[3] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 27, 1837. Francis McFarland Papers. See also Morrison's letter to McFarland of September 19, 1837. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[4] Henry Stroupe, op. cit., p. 132.

slavery issue, contended that the Old School was full of abolitionism; only an alignment with the New School would provide peace on the abolition issue.[1] Plumer, on the other hand, sought to exploit the prevalence of abolitionism in the New School, and asked Francis McFarland (in Philadelphia) to send him anything which could be printed to show that the New School intended to agitate the slavery issue.[2]

In comparison with the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina evidenced much less concern about the slavery issue after the 1837 General Assembly, in spite of the attempts of Converse to brand the Old School as abolitionist. Winchester Presbytery received a letter on slavery from Oneida (New York) Presbytery, and sent it back unread.[3] The Synod of North Carolina issued a curious resolution on the place of slavery in the Assembly actions:

> Resolved, that this Synod regards the attempt to give abolition a principal influence in bringing about the results as making a false issue, &, as it was not alluded to in the debate, they believe it had little

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[1]The charge was made frequently; for major articles see Southern Religious Telegraph, August 25, September 8, September 15, October 6, October 27, December 8, 1837; January 5, January 12, January 19, March 9, March 16, April 13, August 9, 1838; January 9, 1839.

[2]William S. Plumer to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 8, 1837, McFarland Papers. Converse complained that agents soliciting subscriptions for the Watchman of the South said his paper was abolitionist. Southern Religious Telegraph, September 8, 1837. We have had access only to scattered issues of the early months of the Watchman of the South; it is clear from comments in the Southern Religious Telegraph that Plumer made frequent charges that the New School was abolitionist. For later major articles see Watchman of the South, March 8, March 15, 1838.

[3]Minutes of the Presbytery of Winchester, MS, Vol. 7 (September, 1837), p. 196.

> or no influence in bringing about the decision; but they believe the question was honestly debated; & decided on its own merits.[1]

However, most discussion about slavery immediately after the 1837 Assembly seems to have been in the form of invectives thrown against opposing parties, each accusing the other of having abolitionist tendencies.

In like manner there was only limited discussion about the possibility of a geographical division of the Church after the 1837 Assembly. Those in the Synods who held a strong Old School position were reassured by the leadership of such men as Baxter and Plumer, and sentiment for a geographical division which had been prominent among them before the 1837 Assembly virtually died away after the Assembly. Those favoring the New School, on the other hand, held some hope that reconciliation might still be possible, or that the 1838 Assembly might overturn the 1837 actions; if such did happen, a separate Southern organization would prove useless.

One factor in influencing the position taken by those who opposed the Old School was undoubtedly the acumen of Amasa Converse, who as editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph was inevitably the focal point of this group. Converse realized that the options available to his party were rather severely limited. There were, in fact, only three possibilities: forget the disagreements and stay with the Old School; join with the New School (if a separate New School Assembly were organized); or establish a separate Southern denomination, either limited to Virginia or

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Volume for 1837, p. 30.

including the entire South. The first option was more realistic than might appear at first glance; many men who had serious reservations about the 1837 action could not quite bring themselves to a full division. For others--including Converse--only the last two alternatives were realistic. With consummate skill Converse tried to keep both options open as long as possible. An editorial in November, 1837, discussed the objections to a separate Southern organization, but ended by declaring that agitation of slavery in the Church might still make it necessary.[1] Various letters were printed which urged a separate New School Assembly in which discussion on slavery would be banned, but which also affirmed that failure to secure such a ban should lead to the formation of a Southern Assembly.[2]

As the 1838 General Assembly approached there was a definite awareness that slavery might still bring further conflict

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, November 10, 1837. See also Converse's comments May 31, 1838. In a probable reference to the November 10 editorial, James Morrison commented, "The Telegraph still pursues the same reckless course. I think he is now putting out feelers to see whether he can effect farther division by a total separation from the North. A year ago this doctrine was popular. I think it is not now. I know not one of the old school who favors it." James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, November 14, 1837. McFarland Papers. Two months later he again noted the sentiment for a sectional Church: "You probably notice the powerful efforts that are working to excite the sectional feelings of the South. I hope they will be unavailing but still they will have some effect. I have felt great uneasiness on this subject and the more because I know the feeling was once strong in the South, that if division must come then the South had better go by herself. You know that these were once my own views....Let it the Church be cleared of congregationalism and that which is connected with it and I trust all will be well." James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, January 15, 1838. McFarland Papers.

[2] See, for example, Ibid., December 1, December 8, 1837; May 11, 1838.

within the Church. In West Hanover Presbytery, in which New School men had considerable strength, resolutions were introduced which said the 1818 Assembly action on slavery "is unconstitutional, unscriptural, & ought to be repealed", and instructed the Presbytery's commissioners to the Assembly to use their efforts to have slavery declared a civil and political matter in which the Church had no right to interfere.[1] The Old School men in the Presbytery introduced instead a series of resolutions (written by George Baxter) which condemned abolitionism and threatened withdrawal if the matter were agitated in the Assembly.[2] The final Baxter resolution stated that it was "inexpedient" to take action on previous Assembly statements on slavery, since

> If any such acts are of an abolition character, they are plainly unconstitutional, unscriptural, & void, & ought to be disregarded. Besides, those acts have long been a dead letter, & the revival of them at this time by public discussion would have a tendency to violate the laws of our States & the peace of our country.[3]

The Presbytery, after much discussion, apparently decided that even such resolutions might be inexpedient, and the matter was postponed indefinitely, with the Old School men (including Baxter) voting for postponement and the New School men voting against postponement.[4]

On the whole, however, there was great hesitancy to bring the slavery issue before the General Assembly; there was an

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of West Hanover, MS, Vol. 2 (April, 1838), pp. 11-12.

[2] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[3] Ibid., p. 13.

[4] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

instinctive knowledge that efforts to have slavery declared a non-ecclesiastical matter might have a detrimental effect on the fragile alliance between the various segments of the Old School. In a Convention held before the opening of the 1838 General Assembly Southerners played a prominent part. The venerable Dr. William McPheeters of North Carolina was elected President; the Rev. T. D. Baird, who was living in Pennsylvania but had been educated in Moses Waddel's Willington (South Carolina) Academy, was Vice-President. Dr. George Baxter, William Maxwell (a layman from Richmond), and Rev. N. H. Harding (North Carolina) also played prominent parts in the Convention.[1] Of great significance was a Convention resolution on slavery:

> Resolved; That in the judgment of the Convention, it is of the greatest consequence to the best interests of our church, that the subject of slavery shall not be agitated or discussed during the sessions of the ensuing General Assembly; and if any motion shall be made or resolution offered, touching the same, this Convention is of the opinion that the members of the Convention in that body ought to unite in disposing of it, as far as may be possible without debate.[2]

With the withdrawal of the New School men at the beginning of the General Assembly, the course of the Old School was a foregone conclusion.[3]

The formal organization of the New School Assembly forced many in the South who favored the New School to decide on their course of action. Converse acknowledged that all hope of reconciliation with the Old School had passed. He urged that hasty action not be taken, at least until the legal status of the

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[1]"Abstract of Minutes of the Convention," Watchman of the South, May 24, 1838.

[2]Ibid.

[3]It is worth noting that William S. Plumer was moderator of the Old School Assembly; this may in part account for the reluctance of the Watchman of the South to express reservations about the course of the 1838 Assembly in regard to slavery.

two Assemblies had been settled by the courts. He noted also that action would soon be taken to unite all Southern men who opposed the Old School, but stopped short of endorsing a separate Southern Assembly.[1] Several weeks later J. D. Mitchell, a vocal spokesman for a Southern Assembly, said that "the slavery question will never cease to agitate the church while we hold any northern connection."[2] A group of laymen issued a call for a convention of Southerners opposed to the Old School to decide the course to be pursued.[3] In September about fifty ministers and laymen met in Farmville, Virginia, in answer to this call. A number of resolutions were passed in regard to ecclesiastical matters, but the Convention refused to form a separate Southern organization, urging instead that attempts be made to have the presbyteries in Virginia refrain from sending commissioners to either Assembly until issues were clarified.[4] For a time it seemed almost as if Converse would lead the movement for a separate Assembly; he reprinted a long letter from Thomas Magruder, the editor of the Southern Christian Sentinel of South Carolina, which contended the only course of action for the South was complete withdrawal.[5] The October, 1838, meeting of the Synod of Virginia demonstrated clearly that those with New School sentiments were a decided

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, June 7, 1838.

[2] "Letter of J. D. Mitchell", Ibid., June 29, 1838.

[3] Ibid., June 29, 1838; See also the letter of "One of the People", Ibid., July 5, 1838.

[4] "The Meeting at Farmville", Southern Religious Telegraph, September 13, 1838.

[5] "Letter of Thomas Magruder to the Members of Charleston Union Presbytery", Southern Religious Telegraph, September 28, 1838.

minority, but that minority refused to withdraw from the Synod; Converse said a main reason was the absence of some of the strongest men of the minority.[1] Converse himself declared that he was in favor of the minority in the Synod withdrawing and forming separate Presbyteries, although he left open the question of their relationship with the New School Assembly. He admitted, however, that most of the minority favored waiting to see what the outcome of the legal suits would be and hoped that some reconciliation might still be possible.[2] A few weeks later Converse left Richmond, saying that support for the paper had dwindled to the point that he could not continue its publication.[3]

The 1839 General Assembly marked the end of the turmoil over slavery in the two Synods. In the New School Assembly slavery was discussed, but only a weak resolution was passed.[4] Those favoring the New School in the South now felt that the slavery

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[1] "The State of the Church: Position of the Minority at the South", Southern Religious Telegraph, November 1, 1838.

[2] "Why Delay Action?" Southern Religious Telegraph, December 20, 1838.

[3] Southern Religious Telegraph, January 9, 1839. The demise of Converse's paper probably was a factor in the failure of those opposing the Old School in the South to unite in a Southern Church, since there was no other medium of public communication open to them.

[4] "Whereas certain memorials have been sent up to this Assembly from several Presbyteries, desiring some action on the subject of Slavery; and whereas these memorials have been read and freely discussed by this body; and whereas this Assembly is made up of members from different portions of our extended country, who honestly differ in opinion, as well in regard to the propriety as the nature of the ecclesiastical action desired in the case, therefore, Resolved, That this Assembly does most solemnly refer to the lower judicatories the subject of Slavery; leaving it to them to take such order thereon as in their judgment will be most judicious and adapted to remove the evil." GA Minutes (NS), 1839, p. 61.

agitation was comparatively silenced and there was no need for a separate Southern organization.[1] In the Old School it was also clear that the slavery issue was finally at rest. Drury Lacy, a commissioner from North Carolina, noted that "Abolition has not been once named amongst us, & will not be suffered to be."[2]

In summary, therefore, Presbyterian attitudes in Virginia and North Carolina on slavery began to harden about 1827, with the threat of agitation over slavery in the General Assembly. It was recognized that if the Church as a whole took a strong anti-slavery position it would severely limit the ministry of the Church in the two Synods. There was, therefore, a movement toward declaring slavery an issue outside the immediate concern of the Church. Diversity on the question of slavery among Presbyterians in the two Synods was further decreased by the social

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[1] Those in the Synod of Virginia may also have been influenced by the example of the Synod of Tennessee, which had come out in favor of the New School Assembly before the 1839 Assembly.

Several members of Presbyteries in Virginia attended the New School Assembly, in line with their conviction that it was the true Assembly. Some insight into their thinking is given in letters from a commissioner to the Old School Assembly. "I saw Royall & Hiram Howe [?] & Pollack from Richmond yesterday who told me that the subject of Abolition wd. be brought up today in their Ass: & that they expected nothing else but that they wd. be blown to atoms at this their very first meeting. They are already sick and ashamed of their connexion, & if Abolition is discussed are determined to leave it, & form a Southern organization." Drury Lacy to Mrs. Williana Lacy, MS letter, May 21, 1839. See also Drury Lacy to Williana Lacy, MS letter, May 23, 1839. Both letters are in the Drury Lacy Papers, University of North Carolina. The final action of the New School Assembly must have pleased the Southerners, however, as no further sentiment was expressed for a Southern Assembly after the 1839 meeting.

[2] Drury Lacy to Mrs. Williana Lacy, MS letter, May 23, 1839. Drury Lacy Papers, University of North Carolina.

pressure created by the Nat Turner insurrection and the rise of militant abolitionism. At first, Presbyterians in these areas expressed renewed interest in colonization and expressed optimism that the debates over slavery in the Virginia House of Delegates might lead to the adoption of some plan of emancipation. Such hopes were brief, however, and soon Presbyterians accepted the view that slavery could not be eliminated in the foreseeable future. The result was an acceptance of the institution of slavery, and in many cases a willingness to see it as a God-ordained part of society.

As in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, Presbyterians in the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina were deeply affected by the threat of abolitionist agitation in the General Assembly during the Old School - New School controversy. The tendency was to bring an almost complete unanimity of opinion on slavery among Presbyterians in the area. By the end of the 1839 Old School General Assembly it was clear that the slavery stance of Southern Presbyterians in the two Synods was irrevokably fixed.

PART II. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

CHAPTER III. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE SYNODS OF THE OLD SOUTHWEST

Slavery: The Initial Impulse

Slavery: The End of Diversity: Presbyterians Outside East Tennessee

Slavery: The Movement Toward Consensus in East Tennessee

Summary

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE SYNODS OF THE OLD SOUTHWEST

Unlike the other major areas of Southern Presbyterianism, the area known as the Old Southwest--Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana--presents a more diverse picture in regard to slavery during the 1830's. Presbyterians in some sections of the Southwest, for example, accepted slavery as a natural part of the social order from the beginning of settlement; at least, no anti-slavery sentiment can be detected. Indeed, it could be argued that the suitability of the newly-opened lands in the Southwest for large-scale plantations based on slave labor would almost insure that most migrants--including Presbyterians--from the older slave states would be precisely those who had the least objections to slavery. In such cases, therefore, it is slightly misleading to speak of a "transition" taking place on slavery; it would perhaps be more proper to speak of a "hardening" on the question of slavery. On the other hand, East Tennessee maintained a fairly strong anti-slavery position later than any other section of the Southern Church. In spite of this diversity, however, general trends can be detected which illustrate a decided shift on slavery during the decade of the 1830's.

THE INITIAL IMPULSE

It is more difficult to assign a definite cause for the

beginning of transition in the Southwest than for other areas.[1] It seems fairly certain, however, that the initial impulse came from the Southern reaction to the rising tide of abolitionism in the North.

The first firm date that can be assigned for a definite hardening of attitude in the lower Southwest is about 1833. In June, 1832, James G. Birney had accepted the position of agent for the American Colonization Society. He engaged in his work with great diligence, travelling extensively throughout the Southwest. His initial enthusiasm was dampened when he discovered that many people listened to him politely, but very few were won over to the colonization cause. After slightly over a year Birney resigned his agency and determined to leave Alabama. In his letter of resignation he expressed deep disappointment

> ...at the insensibilities of the religious community on the subject of Slavery....So far from sending their slaves to Liberia,[2] the greater part are not slow to justify Slavery....

The next year it was again clear that there was widespread intolerance of anti-slavery sentiment in Alabama. During the summer William Allan returned to Huntsville from Lane Seminary and found

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[1] Research on Presbyterians in the Southwest during this period is hampered by three limitations. First, before 1835 there was no indigenous Presbyterian newspaper in the Southwest; the Calvinistic Magazine (First Series), which ceased publication in 1832, was essentially a theological journal. Second, many minutes of church judicatories during much of the period are no longer extant, in contrast with minutes of similar bodies in the older states; for example, minutes of the Synod of Tennessee are completely missing before 1840. Third, the relatively low number of Presbyterians in many areas of the Southwest, combined with the frontier conditions in some parts, have made manuscript sources such as letters and diaries comparatively rare.

[2] James Birney to Ralph Gurley, September, 1833. Quoted in Finnie, op. cit., p. 187. It should be noted that Birney had spoken in a number of Presbyterian Churches, although his remarks in this letter were not limited to Presbyterians. On Birney's work during this period see Fladeland, op. cit., pp. 51-74: Birney, op. cit., pp. 123-130.

that his abolitionist views encountered much opposition.[1] About the same time Rev. Robert Holman, minister of the Presbyterian Church in Mardisville, Alabama, had occasion to visit Kentucky, where he discussed the question of slavery with James Birney, now a resident of Kentucky. He became convinced of the sinfulness of slavery and determined to free his four slaves. Upon returning to Alabama, Holman distributed copies of Birney's Letter to the Churches: to the Ministers and Elders of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, a courageous act in light of an 1832 Alabama law prescribing the death penalty for the circulation of seditious or incendiary literature. He found, however, that his efforts met with a cold response, and he retreated from his position, stating that the freeing of his slaves would only alienate his people and render his ministry useless.[2]

It was also about 1833 or 1834 that James Smylie began publically to espouse pro-slavery sentiments in Mississippi, although the precise date is unknown. After his death in 1853, the Synod of Mississippi memorialized Smylie in a lengthy report, and included a summary of his early pro-slavery effort:

> When the abolition excitement arose in the North, he resolved as many others ought to have done, to give the Sacred Scriptures a thorough searching to ascertain the doctrines and duties there inculcated in relation to Slavery. He determined to investigate the subject in the most candid manner, and to receive whatever was taught with the most fearless and implicit faith. The result surprised himself. He found that the teachings of Scripture were greatly at variance with the popular belief. He wished to communicate his discovery to others. He wrote a sermon on the subject, and preached it at Port Gibson. It gave great offence, not only to the church but also to his brethren in the ministry, who seriously advised him to preach that sermon no more.[3]

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[1] Fladeland, op. cit., p. 85.

[2] Ibid., pp. 93, 97.

[3] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi, printed, October, 1853, p. 86.

Whether or not this sermon of Smylie's marked "the beginning of what has been called 'the southern apostacy' from the universal moral sentiment of Christendom on the subject of slavery,"[1] is open to debate, but Smylie's significance is nevertheless great. A few years later he wrote an important defense of slavery, presumably expanding upon his sermon.[2]

Smylie is important for another reason, however. He provides a prime example of the diverse motives which led some Presbyterians to adopt an aggressive pro-slavery position. The statements of the Synod of Mississippi on Smylie's "discovery" have been accepted at face value by later historians, but a closer examination shows that the Synod memorial gives a false picture of Smylie's position.[3] Far from being a sudden and surprising discovery, Smylie's "fearless" investigation instead only confirmed his long-standing convictions on slavery.

The sermon is not extant. The date is uncertain; Bacon suggested 1833. Leonard Bacon, A History of American Christianity (London: James Clarke & Co., 1899), p. 277. Smylie's concern over the rising tide of abolitionism, especially in the churches, is indicated in a letter written in 1833 to his son-in-law, and refers to an unidentified piece of abolitionist literature directed at Presbyterians: "I should like to see the letter to presbyterians, nullifying the right of slave-holders to communion--I should not be surprised if the doctrine would become so popular as to get it, in a few years, sanctioned by the Genl Assembly--For I find on acquaintance with mankind, that it is rare to find the man who has collected the most of his opinions from scripture...." James Smylie to Joseph Montgomery, MS letter, July 27, 1833, Joseph A. Montgomery Family Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Although there is no certainty about the matter, it is possible that Smylie produced his sermon shortly after this in response to this item. Rogers' identification of this sermon with Smylie's later pro-slavery pamphlet is incorrect. (T. Rogers, "Dr. Frederick A. Ross and the Presbyterian Defense of Slavery," p. 121.)

[1] Bacon, loc. cit.

[2] Infra, pp. 200-203.

[3] In addition to Leonard Bacon, loc. cit., see Posey, op. cit., pp. 79-80, and E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 343, for examples of those who have accepted the Synod memorial.

This is seen first of all in a letter written by Smylie in 1836 in answer to a request for a copy of his recently-published pamphlet on slavery:

> I lived in obscurity in the pine woods. My name was never known before the publick as a writer. My sentiments were at variance with the decisions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church----....They were also at variance with the commentators of the scriptures on that subject of all societies. I knew that I had to contend with the greatest divines of Europe & America, as well as the prejudices of two centuries past....But I felt concious (sic) that I had truth on my side. I had been examining the subject for 14 years & had often written to great men, or to the men of great names, requesting them to come out with my views, but in vain.[1]

Not only was Smylie's position one he had held for many years, but closer investigation shows that he would have had ample reason to maintain it, for Smylie's activities were not limited to the ministry. He had come to Mississippi as a missionary of the Presbytery of Orange (North Carolina) about 1804 or 1805.[2] Finding the country in the southern part of Mississippi ideal for plantations, he induced his father, along with his six brothers and sisters and their families, to move from North Carolina to the new area. The family already possessed slaves, and used them to clear the land.[3] Smylie himself was responsible for organizing a number

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[1]James Smylie to F. D. Richardson, MS letter, October 14, 1836, Marcellin Gillis Papers, University of North Carolina (microfilmed copy of letter in private possession).

[2]For Smylie's work as a minister see T. L. Haman, "Beginnings of Presbyterianism in Mississippi," Mississippi Historical Society Publications, Vol. 10, pp. 213-221; C. W. Grafton, "History of the Mississippi Synod of the Presbyterian Church" (microfilm copy of typescript, Mississippi Department of Archives and History), Chapter Thirteen; Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi, printed, October, 1853, pp. 82-87.

[3]Kate Markham Power, "The Smylie Family, 1776-1935." MS typescript, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, p. 4.

of early churches and also opened an academy, but he also soon became deeply involved in planting. He may have leased an extensive tract of land as early as 1810.[1] In 1814 he purchased eight slaves for $1,545.00.[2] In 1819 he apparently gave thought to selling some of his slaves, but was advised against it by a cousin because of falling prices. The cousin added that his advice was probably unnecessary: "I have often observed those best acquainted with spiritual business were least with temporal, but I can hardly say so of you, for I think you understand both."[3] Even more revealing are the United States Census returns for 1830; in that year James Smylie owned fifty-three slaves, making him one of the largest slaveholders in Amite County.[4] The size of his land holdings is difficult to ascertain. However, in 1816 he received two parcels of land of 974 and 975 acres respectively; in 1827 he received another land grant of 704 acres, and in 1836--the year he published his pro-slavery pamphlet--he obtained another 5411 acres.[5] Much of this was sold

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[1]Receipt for $210.00 for payment received from James Smylie for a lease, MS, Dalton Watson Papers, University of Southwestern Louisiana. It is uncertain, however, whether the reference is to him or his father, who was also named James. A geneological chart of the Smylie family gives the date of the father's death as 1812. "Descendants of John Smylie of Argyll through his Son James Smylie," MS chart drawn by Alexander Allison, Jr., Joseph A. Montgomery Family Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[2]Bill of sale, MS, April 14, 1814, Dalton Watson Papers, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

[3]Alex McAulay to James Smylie, MS letter, November 22, 1819. Dalton Watson Papers, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

[4]Albert E. Casey et al, compilers. "Amite County, Mississippi, 1699-1865: Data selected, analyzed, and compiled from the records on file in the courthouse at Liberty, Mississippi; in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; in the National Archives, The Library of Congress, and in the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., and from various bibliographic sources." (Privately mimeographed, 1948), p. 363, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[5]Ibid., pp. 517, 515, 509.

from time to time, but in 1848 he still possessed at least 3,560 acres.[1] As a descendant stated, he

> ...was possessed of all those peculiar qualities pertaining to the canny Scots by which, with foresight, thrift and diligence, they acquire wealth and wide possessions....James Smylie became great not only as a minister of the Gospel but as a man of business, upright and honest and rich beyond average.[2]

THE END OF DIVERSITY: PRESBYTERIANS OUTSIDE EAST TENNESSEE

Because of the unique situation in East Tennessee it is impossible to treat the subject of slavery in the Southwest as a unit. This is especially true in examining the transition which took place in the attitude toward slavery, since some degree of anti-slavery sentiment persisted much later in East Tennessee than in other areas. We shall therefore examine first developments in areas of the Southwest other than East Tennessee, and will then turn to East Tennessee. It is equally difficult to detect the intermediate stage we have termed "the movement toward consensus" in the Southwest (outside East Tennessee); we therefore have omitted this in our discussion, and will treat the events in this area from 1835 onward as a unit.

As with other areas of the South, the increased agitation of the slavery issue in the Presbyterian General Assembly forced

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[1] "1848--Lands of James Smylie: Taxable lands on Beaver Creek; Taxable lands on Amite River," MS, Dalton Watson Papers, University of Southwestern Louisiana. This was not necessarily a complete listing of his holdings.

[2] Kate Markham Power, op. cit., pp. 4, 20. The extant papers of Smylie in the Dalton Watson Papers (University of Southwestern Louisiana) and the Joseph A. Montgomery Family Papers (Mississippi Department of Archives and History), although not large in number, contain numerous references to Smylie's slaves, land holdings, and other business matters.

Southern Presbyterians to take a hardened position. The Church judicatories in the Southwest had taken no direct notice of abolitionism before 1835, but the appointment of a special committee to investigate the question of slavery by the 1835 General Assembly led to several actions by synods and presbyteries. The September meeting of the Presbytery of South Alabama--just a few months after the General Assembly--gave full attention to the question of abolition. Its resolutions did not mention the agitation threatening in the General Assembly, but they were almost certainly adopted to make the Presbytery's position clear to Presbyterians outside the South, as well as to quiet suspicions within the South about Presbyterian attitudes:

> Resolved that in the opinion of this Presbytery the Schemes and efforts of the Abolitionists of the North are ruinous to the peace & happiness of our beloved country and that the circulation of Incendiary Papers and Pamphlets deserves the reprobation of this community as distructive to the comfort of the Slave population the interest of the Church and the Stability of established Institutions
> Resolved that it be recommended to the members of our churches not to incourage the circulation of any Newspapers or Pamphlet that advocates in any way the views of the Abolitionists and that whenever such papers or pamphlets are thrust upon us gratuitously they be immediately returned.[1]

A similar resolution came from the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa (Alabama), although it managed to cover more thoroughly the objections of Presbyterians to abolition; it likewise contended that the matter was one in which the Church had no jurisdiction:

> Resolved, that this Presbytery consider the interference of Abolition Societies in the north, with our domestic relations in the south as wicked and fanatical; as also cruel and uncalled for--It produces alarm in our country and compells us to adopt measures with regard to our

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, September, 1835, Vol. 4, p. 12.

> families, that are painful to ourselves & unnecessary, but for this interference--If the evil of which the Abolitionist complain exist--it is one from which they are free; it is one with which we have been born, which is interwoven with all our institutions and which cannot suddenly be abolished, without producing convulsions the most disastrous to all classes of society--It would rend the union of the States and lay one of the fairest portions of our country in ruins. As it has always been one of the happiest features of our government, to keep the Church and State entirely destinct (sic), so we wish them to continue and as this subject is one which we consider entirely political, we are resolved to leave it in the hands of our Legislative & Judicial tribunals.[1]

A few weeks later the Synod of Alabama approved the resolutions which had been passed by various Alabama presbyteries on the question of abolition, and adopted as well its own declaration on abolitionism. Unlike the several resolutions from presbyteries, the Synod made direct reference to the threat of abolitionism to the unity of the Presbyterian Church:

> In this day of public excitement and fanatical excess, the Synod feel called upon to warn the churches against the agitators of the public mind, who, reckless of consequences, and desperate in spirit, are endangering the integrity of the American Union, and the unity of the Presbyterian Church, by the unchristian methods which they adopt to advance the cause of abolition....If they succeed, they must rend the church, and the Union in twain, deluge the land in blood, and destroy the best hopes of the unhappy slaves.[2]

The Synod of West Tennessee, which had been formed in 1826 to encompass presbyteries in the rapidly-growing planting areas in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi, also spoke of the danger of abolitionism. The statement is partly of interest because of the Synod's obvious hesitancy to speak on what they considered a

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa, MS, October, 1835, Vol. 1, pp. 27-28.

[2] "Extracts from the Minutes of the Synod of Alabama," Charleston Observer, November 21, 1835; also copies in American Presbyterian, December 10, 1835. MS Minutes of the Synod of Alabama are not extant before 1840.

political issue. The resolution also made oblique reference to the dangers of abolitionist agitations to the Church:

> Synod in view of the agitations which on the subject of abolitionism are at present in some sections of our country not only disturbing its civil associations but also alienating the affections of brethren of the same common Saviour:
>
> Resolved that while we utterly disclaim any disposition or design to interfere with this subject in any of its civil or political bearings as incompatible with our offices, labors, & relations as Ministers & ruling Elders in the Church; yet in view of our own sense of responsibility as office-bearers in the house of God we cannot forbear to express our entire disapprobation of the plans & operations of abolition & all antislavery societies whose object is the immediate indiscriminate or unconditional emancipation of slaves, as subversive of the peace & well being of our common country & of the best interests of our beloved Zion.[1]

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of West Tennessee, MS, October, 1835, Vol. 1, p. 121. The Synod's hesitancy shows they were conscious of a dilemma which was not always recognized. Agitation in the General Assembly was, in the Southern view, unacceptable, and a major reason presented by Southern judicatories for this was that slavery was a civil matter only. However, silence on the issue of abolition by a Southern judicatory was open to misunderstanding, both in the North and the South; it was in the best interest of the judicatories in the South to speak on the problem. How could presbyteries and synods, therefore, do that which they forbade the General Assembly to do? How could they contend on one hand that slavery was a civil matter and that the Church was not to interfere in civil matters, and on the other hand speak their minds on the matter of abolitionism and slavery? The resolution of the Synod of West Tennessee came perhaps as close to resolving the difficulty as was possible, by saying that the danger abolitionism presented to the Church and to society generally gave them authority to speak.

The editorial comment of the American Presbyterian, which had started publication a few months before in Nashville, shows something of the sensitivity which was felt on the danger of Church interference in political matters; it also is a good illustration of the diverse views found in the State of Tennessee: "In reference to the subject of Abolitionism, we presume the minute adopted, will give satisfaction to the great majority, if not to all our readers in this part of our country. It will be seen by reading it, that the Synod viewed this subject merely in its moral aspect, without the least allusion to its civil or political bearings. By its adoption unanimous as it almost was, no member present intended in the slightest degree either to turn politician, or to give his approval of slavery as a moral and political evil, in our beloved country. This evil, all with one voice must admit. But the Synod believed that abolitionists, instead of pursuing plans calculated gradually to remove it, as the American Colonization Society, in its constitution, is

Any lingering doubts about the depth of the danger of abolitionist agitation in the General Assembly were dispelled by the receipt of the letter on slavery sent to all presbyteries by the Presbytery of Chillicothe (Ohio). The Presbytery of North Alabama laid the matter on the table and refused to take further action on it.[1] At a later date, the same action was taken by the Presbytery of South Alabama.[2] In Tennessee, the Presbytery of the Western District (Synod of West Tennessee) answered the letter by decrying the interference of the North in the domestic affairs of the South:

> What if the South were to fill the North with publications encouraging "strikes" there, among their mechanics, and contend that every professor of religion that opposed these "turn outs" for higher wages, should be cut off from the church? Could they regard us as acting the part of Christians?[3]

In Mississippi the Presbytery of Amite likewise took action on

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happily devised in the end to accomplish, were only augmenting what they call a curse, and deepening for the present its foundations." American Presbyterian, October 15, 1835. Whether or not the American Presbyterian's interpretation was correct is open to question.

[1]Minutes of the Presbytery of North Alabama, MS, April, 1836, Vol. 1, p. 193. While refusing to answer the letter directly, the Presbytery did adopt an extended memorial on abolition. It is of interest partly because it presented a lengthy defense of slavery from Scripture. Vol. 1, pp. 199-202.

[2]Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, October, 1836, Vol. 2, p. 55.

[3]"Western District Presbytery," American Presbyterian, April 28, 1836. The newspaper account appears to give only a part of the reply to the Chillicothe communication. MS minutes for this meeting are not extant. Although making no reference to the Chillicothe letter, the Presbytery of Shiloh, also part of the Synod of West Tennessee, lamented the low state of religion, saying that a major cause was preoccupation with abolitionist agitations. "Narrative of the State of Religion--Shiloh Presbytery," American Presbyterian, April 28, 1836. MS minutes not extant.

the Chillicothe letter. In a lengthy reply signed by the Stated Clerk, Benjamin Chase, the Presbytery, with tongue in cheek, expressed deep sympathy to their brethren in Ohio, since it was clear from their letter that slavery had caused them serious problems; Presbyterians in Mississippi, however, were prospering. The letter then accused the Presbytery of Chillicothe of attempting to set itself above the General Assembly, by assuming the right to declare new standards for church membership, namely, non-slaveholding.

> The denunciation of a practice as sinful, without adducing a particle of proof, either from reason or revelation, that it is sinful, is not calculated to produce conviction in the minds of intelligent men; nor is the adoption of unauthorized terms of communion, for the avowed purpose of exclusion from the Church, calculated to produce a favorable effect on the minds of protestants....We do not believe that the holding of slaves is necessarily sinful ....We think it our duty to imitate the example of the Apostles, and preach the Gospel, teaching the same truths which they taught, without interfering with the political condition of men.[1]

The receipt of the Chillicothe letter by Amite Presbytery also brought forth a significant reply by one of the Presbytery's members, James Smylie. Smylie, as former Stated Clerk of the old Presbytery of Mississippi (which had been recently divided), had received the letter from Chillicothe. He determined immediately to write a reply, hoping that it would be adopted by the Presbytery of Amite as their official answer. This the Presbytery failed to do, accepting instead the briefer letter of Benjamin Chase.[2] Smylie

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[1]Benjamin Chase to the Presbytery of Chillicothe, MS letter, March 18, 1836, Shane Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society. The letter is also printed as a supplement in James Smylie, op. cit., pp. 81-87; the text is not included in the MS minutes.

[2]The memorial of Smylie adopted after his death by the Synod of Mississippi in 1853 suggested that the reasons it was not adopted by the Presbytery were that it was too long, and that its sentiments were not shared by others in the Presbytery. Further, when he deter-

then determined to publish it himself, which he did at a personal cost in excess of eight hundred dollars.[1] Without taking time to make corrections Smylie rushed it to the printer:

> To save time I thought important because Abolition was gaining ground, & even in Miss. & La. the mass of the community were divided in their views of Slavery--Hence the importance not only of uniting, in sentiment, the people of the south, but also the importance of showing to the north that the whole Abolition doctrine was unsupported by scripture. To save the Church & the government, I thought, there was no time to lose; what was done must be done speedily, or it would be too late.[2]

In the pamphlet itself Smylie declared again his concern that Southerners understand the true Biblical teaching on slavery. Writing in the third person, he set forth his position:

> From his intercourse with religious societies of all denominations, in Mississippi and Louisiana, he was aware that the abolition maxim, viz: that slavery is itself sinful, had gained on, and entwined itself among the religious and conscientious scruples of many in the community, so far as not only to render them unhappy, but to draw off the attention from the great and important duty of a householder to his household....beautiful and delightful, does the reviewer trust, will it be, to an honest scrupulous and conscientious slaveholder, to learn, from the word of God, the glad news that slavery, itself, is not sinful...."[3]

The pamphlet itself followed lines that would become familiar in the Southern defense of slavery on Biblical grounds.

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mined to publish it, "Such was the variation of his sentiments from those of his brethren, that all whom he consulted, with but one or two exceptions, attempted to dissuade him from this step." Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi, printed, October, 1853, pp. 86-87. It is difficult to accept this as an accurate account, however; although briefer, the Presbytery's reply to Chillicothe hardly reflects any anti-slavery sentiment.

[1] James Smylie to F. D. Richardson, MS letter, October 14, 1836. Marcellin Gillis Papers (microfilm of papers in private possession), University of North Carolina.

[2] Ibid.

[3] James Smylie, op. cit., pp. 3, 4.

Smylie examined in some detail the social structure of Old Testament society, and found that slavery was accepted without question. He then looked at slavery in the pagan cultures of the New Testament era, and then turned to the reaction of the early Christians to slavery. About half of the pamphlet was devoted to a point-by-point analysis of the letter from the Presbytery of Chillicothe. Two major points emerged from his investigation: slavery was not sinful, and its existence was a civil matter about which the Church had no right to speak.

The pamphlet was apparently circulated widely; Smylie sent eight hundred copies to be sold in New Orleans alone.[1] The Southern Christian Herald republished the entire work in a series of installments. The editor called it an important summary of the Southern position, and lamented the fact that so few Southern Christians were aware of it and similar works.[2] It likewise reached the North:

> You cannot conceive how much my mind is relieved, by hearing from Massachusetts & Rhode Island, that the few copies I sent there, have brought some of the Abolitionists to a dead stand, & others to abandon Abolitionism entirely.[3]

This was not the universal reaction in the North, however. The noted philanthropist and abolitionist, Gerrit Smith, wrote a sharp reply in which he contended that the Southern practice of slavery was so different from that practiced in Biblical times that any comparison was impossible.[4] The whole structure of Southern slavery was such

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[1] Smylie to Richardson, loc. cit.

[2] The work was published weekly from March 2 through April 20, 1838. For the editor's comments on Smylie's pamphlet see Southern Christian Herald, March 2 and April 27, 1838.

[3] Smylie to Richardson, loc. cit.

[4] Gerrit Smith, Letter of Gerrit Smith to Rev. James Smylie, of the

that it ran completely counter to the fulfillment of God's will for the slave.[1]

The action of the 1836 General Assembly on slavery was greeted as a hopeful sign by the editor of the American Presbyterian.[2] It was clear, however, that not all interpreted it in this way. A letter to the editor from Alabama said it was clear that division must come to the Church, but contended that those in the South favoring the Old School should maintain their ties with the North. This would be feasible, because the Old School was not tainted with abolitionism:

> There is not an abolitionist in that body.--Am I correct? We believe than an orthodox assembly may be formed embracing all whom we desire--all who are of one mind in regard to the leading questions of contest, with scarcely a spice of abolitionism. But we may ask this question, and leave it for those concerned to answer. How can southern new-school men sit in conclave with northern abolitionists?[3]

As the 1837 General Assembly approached the tensions within various judicatories became stronger. The Presbytery of South Alabama issued instructions to its commissioners similar to those given to commissioners from many presbyteries in the older Southern states:

> Resolved that our Commissioners to the next General Assembly be instructed that it is the sense of this Presbytery, that the Assembly have no Constitutional right to interfere in any manner with the Institution of Slavery, and that they

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State of Mississippi, (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1837).

[1]"The slave, instead of being allowed to make it the great end of his existence to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, is degraded from his exalted nature, which borders upon angelic dignity, to be, to do, and to suffer what a mere man bids him be, do, and suffer." Ibid., p. 10.

[2]American Presbyterian, June 19, 1836.

[3]Letter of "Alquis," American Presbyterian, September 8, 1836.

> be required to use their effort to prevent the introduction of any petitions or memorials into the Assembly and as far as possible prevent discussion of that subject in the Assembly.[1]

The Presbytery of Amite issued no instructions to its commissioners; their position was clear, however, in that they sent James Smylie as one of their representatives.

Most presbyteries in the Southwest, however, did not give instructions to their commissioners. In some presbyteries this may have been because such instructions were unnecessary. However, the major reason was that many presbyteries were in serious danger of division and were thus in no position to issue instructions to their commissioners, regardless of content. As would become clear later when presbyteries voted on the actions of the 1837 General Assembly, many presbyteries had strong contingents of men who were sympathetic to the New School position in matters of doctrine and polity; in some presbyteries they constituted a majority. Such men would almost certainly have opposed anything which could conceivably have forced them to oppose their New School brethren in the North. It is significant that comparatively few presbyteries in the Southwest sent delegates to the pre-assembly convention called by the Old School.

A few months before the Assembly met the editor of the American Presbyterian had hinted at a slight shift in his stand on slavery, which he had consistently (although not vigorously) opposed. Reprinting an article from a Boston paper urging slave evangelization, the editor commented:

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, April, 1837, Vol. 4, p. 97.

> Every one, who is at all acquainted with history, knows that the system of slavery, which our Saviour and the apostles found among the people, to whom they taught the will of God, was altogether more severe than it is with us. How then came it to pass that, in all their discourses, they did not for once allude, directly, to the impropriety and malignant nature of the thing?...Let the kind-hearted folks at the North, who have run into a paroxism of benevolence for the children of Africa, direct their labors, soberly and in earnest as our writer advises, to Christianize both master and slaves; and they will, in a short time, by mutual consent, bring about the will of God, in relation to them both; be this will to modify or be it to dissolve their connexion.[1]

The American Presbyterian, which had at first attempted to remain neutral in the ecclesiastical controversies that were sweeping the Church, came out in favor of the Old School after the 1837 General Assembly. It reprinted the long address given by G. A. Baxter at Union Seminary which contended that the exscinded synods in the North were hotbeds of abolitionism; the address was warmly commended by the editor.[2] After this, however, the editor remained curiously silent, possibly in the interests of maintaining circulation among those inclined to the New School. As the various presbyteries in the Southwest (especially in Tennessee) voted on the actions of the 1837 Assembly, it became clear that the New School men had great strength. North Alabama Presbytery disapproved of the Assembly action, as did Shiloh Presbytery; the Synod of West Tennessee approved the action, but only by a narrow margin.[3]

It was only after the 1838 General Assembly, with the formal organization of the New School Assembly, that slavery again came

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[1] American Presbyterian, March 23, 1837.

[2] Ibid., August 18, 1837.

[3] American Presbyterian, September 21, October 12, November 2, 1837.

to the forefront in the Southwest. There had been strong hopes of reconciliation previously, but it was now clear that the options available to Southern Presbyterians were limited.[1] It was only at this point that discussion began seriously about the possibility of forming a separate Southern denomination. The American Presbyterian followed carefully the actions of both Assemblies, including the course of petitions on slavery. A letter to the editor urged the formation of a separate Southern Church, because of the probability of agitation on the slavery issue:

> But both bodies are in special danger of dividing on the Slavery question.--This question was brought up in both Assemblies, and owing to peculiar circumstances, laid for the present on the table. But it will be as easy as to chain the winds of heaven as to prevent the discussion of that question in either of those bodies. To avoid these manifold difficulties would it not be well for the Ministers, and Churches in the West, and South to form no connexion at present with either body;--but to maintain their present Presbyterial, and Synodical connexions, and transact their own business in their own way?[2]

The writer went on to suggest that it might not even be necessary to form a Southern General Assembly, but that Synods could be formed into a loose confederation.

The editor of the American Presbyterian disagreed with his correspondent. Such a division could be easily effected, he agreed, but would be very difficult to heal. However, the real danger was that such a division might even lead to political disunion:

> That which makes us most fearful of such an experiment is, that an ecclesiastical separation between the two

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[1] "For ourselves we frankly confess that we never, until of late, could for one moment believe that our denomination should divide....division seems inevitable; unless our differences can be compromised on just and abiding principles, and our alienation of feelings reconciled, division is most devoutly to be desired." Ibid., April 26, 1838.

[2] Ibid., July 26, 1838.

> great sections of our country, might prove the harbinger of that awful calamity--a separation of the political union under which our happy country has so long, and so wonderfully flourished. It would break one of the ties which now bind together the North and the South. What is it that has hitherto kept this vast country safe and prosperous under the Federal Constitution? Not the written Constitution...--but the pervading sentiment that we all were, and ought to be one people. This sentiment has been nourished and strengthened in part, by the religious connexions spread over all the States....Destroy even for a period, the ecclesiastical union of real Presbyterians of the North and South, and fewer, and weaker, will be the bonds that bind them together.[1]

He further contended that withdrawal from the North would result in the isolation of Northern moderates on slavery in both Assemblies, and allow the abolitionists to gain control.

No further letters favoring a separate Southern Church appeared in the paper, but the number of letters which were published against the proposal indicate that the matter was being seriously considered in some quarters. One correspondent said the proposal was "one of the most mischievous and ruinous, of any thing which has yet been agitated," and said that the withdrawal of Southerners from their Northern brethren was exactly what Northern abolitionists hoped to accomplish. He further contended that the major voices calling for a separate Southern Church were without exception men who favored the New School.[2] The latter charge may well have been true, for those in the Southwest favoring the New School found themselves in the same difficulty as those of similar sentiments elsewhere in the South. Staying with the Old School would involve the acceptance of actions of the 1837 Assembly, as well the doctrine and

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Letter of "Augustus," Ibid., August 9, 1838. For other good examples of letters against a geographical division see Ibid., August 23 and August 30, 1838.

polity of the Old School. The only argument against going with the New School, however, was the threat of agitation over the slavery issue.

It was clear, as time went on, that the Old School men in the Southwest did not favor a separate Assembly. The Presbytery of the Western District took the unusual step of addressing a pastoral letter on the crisis to the churches under their care. It gave full attention to the question of division, and spoke against it:

> We would especially call your attention to an effort, that will doubtless be made, by some who are disaffected towards our church...to effect a third division by forming what they call a Southern peaceful Synod, or Church! The specious argument for this wild mischievous project is peace; but how can it bring peace? on the contrary would such a scheme serve any other purpose than to throw the whole Southern section of the church into confusion, and tend to sever those bonds of union, political, as well as ecclesiastical, on which the peace and prosperity, and the permanence of our happy country depends? We therefore warn you against such a delusion, and entreat you as citizens and christians, as patriots and presbyterians, not to become the dupes of suggestions so fatal at once to the interests of our church and our country.[1]

By the time of the 1839 General Assemblies it was clear that there would be no geographical division. It was also clear by then that the Old School would probably not agitate slavery. It was less evident that the New School would adopt the same position, but the inaction of that Assembly in 1838 and 1839 on slavery undoubtedly did much to insure the demise of plans for a Southern Assembly. By 1839 many New School presbyteries in Tennessee and central Mississippi had been formed, many of them from men who had been educated in East

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[1]"A Pastoral Letter Addressed to the Churches Under the Care of the Presbytery of the Western District, Tennessee," Ibid., August 9, 1838, MS minutes not extant.

Tennessee, a strong New School area.[1]

The effect of the division of the Church in the Southwest on the attitude of Presbyterians toward slavery was to bring about a firm pro-slavery position, both among Old School and New School Presbyterians. Among those favoring the Old School slavery became a useful tool for embarrassing the New School in the South.[2] By contending that the New School was thoroughly infected with abolitionism the Old School did two things. First, they hardened their own position in regard to slavery, and became identified in the public mind with a firm pro-slavery attitude. Second, they forced the New School in the Southwest to answer the charge. The only answer that was feasible was a strong denial of the charge--but this then forced the New School into a firm pro-slavery position as well. The division not only meant that neutrality on ecclesiastical questions was no longer possible; it spelled the death of neutrality on the issue of slavery. By 1839 diversity on the question of slavery among Presbyterians in the Southwest was ended.

THE MOVEMENT TOWARD CONSENSUS IN EAST TENNESSEE

We have noted previously the comparatively strong anti-slavery sentiment in East Tennessee.[3] As the agitation over slavery

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[1]For a convenient summary of the course of the division in the Southwest, including the voting within each presbytery, see E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 395-412.

[2]For an example of Old School use of the slavery issue to identify the New School with abolitionism see the comments of Rev. S. G. Winchester, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Natchez, in the Southern Religious Telegraph, December 13, 1838. Winchester had only recently come South, and is a good example of the many men who came from the North but became loudly pro-slavery in the South to ally suspicions as to their orthodoxy on the slavery question.

[3]Supra, p.p. 76-84.

increased, both in the North and in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, this sentiment became less pronounced and eventually became silent. It did so, however, later than in any other section of the Southern Church.

By the mid-1830's it was already possible to detect a weakening in the strength of anti-slavery feeling in East Tennessee. One reason probably was the removal of some of the leading anti-slavery men of earlier years, either by death or by change of residence. The defeat of many anti-slavery proposals during the revision of the State Constitution in 1834 in all likelihood had a negative effect on anti-slavery sentiment among Presbyterians.[1] Nevertheless, many were still convinced that slavery was an evil, and that its abolition should be encouraged.

This did not mean, however, that the plans of Northern abolitionists were endorsed. Noting the withdrawal of students from Lane Seminary over the issue of slavery the editor of the American Presbyterian made it clear that no anti-slavery societies which advocated immediate abolition would be welcome in Tennessee.[2] A few

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[1]See the discussion in Finnie, op. cit., pp. 250-251, for an evaluation of the effect of the 1834 Constitution on anti-slavery forces in Tennessee.

[2]American Presbyterian, January 8, 1835. See also the issue of February 5, 1835. The American Presbyterian was published in Nashville, in middle Tennessee, but circulated widely in East Tennessee, where Presbyterianism was stronger than in other areas of the State. Since letters seldom were identified as to their geographical source, it is difficult to say definitely that such sentiments were held by Presbyterians in East Tennessee. In the following section we have made frequent reference to the views of the American Presbyterian, assuming them to be generally representative of East Tennessee as well as the Nashville area, until the paper declared itself on the Old School side in 1837. The paper, always in precarious financial condition, depended heavily on the large Presbyterian population in East Tennessee for its circulation, and it seems safe to assume that the editor would have done everything possible to make his positions amenable to East Tennessee Presbyterians.

weeks later a writer in the same paper expressed his horror of abolitionist schemes, although still advocating the eventual abolition of slavery:

> Were this beautiful State, placed in the hands of some malevolent being--some fiend of darkness, who had the power of inflicting upon it the greatest evil he could devise--we think in making that selection he could not find a greater than immediate and universal emancipation! ....While we thus view with abhorrence abolitionism, as fraught with the greatest evils, we heartily subscribe to the sentiment, that if the condition of the slave can be bettered, and society not injured by his emancipation, it is praiseworthy and humane to set him free--but if not, we think no such duty arises. That the condition of the slave should be bettered, he must be fitted for it....It therefore follows, that emancipation should be a gradual process, and cannot be made to operate generally on the present generation.[1]

Another correspondent agreed that abolitionism was misguided, but insisted that it should not blind people to the need for emancipation. Noting the abolitionist position of the Lane Seminary students, he said:

> We all agree that Theological students should not meddle with abolitionism in any form, for it is a question of political as well as religious tendency. But is not abolitionism practicable in some form, provided masters are willing to manumit their negroes? Could not this great Christian nation provide for the African race at present among us, so as thereby to better their condition, seeing the national debt is paid, and there being a productive revenue unappropriated?[2]

Three things are of special interest about the statement. The first is the evident belief of the writer that slavery should be abolished. The second item of note is his affirmation that slavery is not just a civil or political matter, but is a religious matter as well. Third, he hints that a plan of emancipation could be carried out by some scheme of compensation by the Federal Government, and -- an interesting

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[1] Ibid., January 22, 1835.

[2] Letter of "Africanus," Ibid., February 12, 1835.

omission--he does not link this with either a long-term period of preparation for freedom or colonization, although this may simply be a result of brevity. It is difficult to imagine a letter like this being published in most other areas of the South at that date.

Some months later--about the time of the meeting of the 1835 General Assembly--the American Presbyterian again spoke for some system of emancipation, while rejecting immediate abolition:

> Slavery is certainly a very great evil--but it is one which we had no hand in originating. That it is an evil, it is presumed no one will question--but how is it to be remedied?...We have before expressed our opinion upon the subject of immediate and indiscriminate emancipation. We believe the evil of slavery is not to be remedied in this way....We believe that whenever this takes place, it must be gradual, and that by a proper course of education and discipline, they must be fitted for it--it must be voluntary, and authorised by law well adapted to the subject....Duty consists not only in doing what is right, but in doing it in the right manner.[1]

Beyond such general suggestions, however, the editor was unwilling or unable to go.

It is possible to see in such statements (all from the first half of 1835) a reaffirmation of the anti-slavery sentiment which had been common in East Tennessee. It is equally possible, however, to see some degree of lessening in that sentiment. Emancipation is seen as a far-off goal, with no practical means currently functioning to effect that goal. In light of the 1834 State Constitution, furthermore, it was equally clear that there was little immediate hope of legal encouragement toward emancipation.

Whether such statements indicate a slackening in anti-slavery sentiment or not under the pressure of abolitionism, it was evident after the 1835 General Assembly that a movement toward con-

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[1] American Presbyterian, June 25, 1835.

sensus was underway. As in other areas of the South, the danger of abolitionist agitation in the Assembly was seen as a serious threat to the unity of the Church. The American Presbyterian renewed its attack on abolitionism, warning that their doctrines were "highly culpable and dangerous" and would lead to disunion and anarchy, as well as the ruin of the black population.[1] The editor further recommended that churches investigate thoroughly any individual or organization that was seeking benevolence money to be sure that they were not tainted with abolitionism.[2] The paper also took ample notice of the visit to New England of the British abolitionist, George Thompson, calling him "impudent" and "ignorant."[3] At the same time, the paper published a letter from Thomas Hall, a minister in East Tennessee, in which he denied charges that he was an abolitionist. He furthermore denied that the anti-slavery society active in his area was responsible for a rumored insurrection, saying that he knew those who were active in it and knew the charge was false.[4]

To a greater degree than any other area of the South, East Tennessee resisted the pressures on slavery that built up during 1835 and 1836. It is significant that no presbytery in the area apparently took action to question the right of the General Assembly to speak on the question of slavery, or to instruct commissioners to withdraw if the issue were raised in the Assembly. Furthermore, anti-slavery sentiment was still evident. While vigorously attacking

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[1] Ibid., August 20, 1835.

[2] Ibid., August 27, 1835.

[3] Ibid., August 20, 1835. For other statements on Thompson see the issues of October 22, 1836; November 17, 1836; December 22, 1836; May 4, 1837.

[4] Ibid., October 8, 1835.

abolitionism, the American Presbyterian also stated:

> We are far, very far, from being the advocates of slavery of any kind. All must admit its existence, whether of the body or the mind, to be a most deplorable evil. But we are equally as far removed from all false remedies for its removal....[1]

The action of the 1836 General Assembly on slavery was met with approval by the editor of the American Presbyterian, who optimistically said that it would "gratify most, if not all our readers."[2] In the following months he continued his attack on abolitionism, but made little comment on the issues facing the General Assembly. A hint of the difficulties to come was given, however, in a series of letters to the editor discussing the presence of abolitionists at Maryville College in East Tennessee. The accusation was denied by the editor, and a further letter from East Tennessee gave first-hand knowledge of the situation.[3] The correspondent deplored the attempt to label those with New School sentiments as abolitionists as well. The letter continued to give a revealing look at the feelings of Presbyterians in East Tennessee on the matter of slavery:

> But let me not be understood that East Tennessee Presbyterians are in love with the system of domestic slavery. In common with hundreds of citizens of the West that I could name, hundreds here believe it to be wrong and ruinous. In spite of all the logic and criticism that come from certain quarters, we feel that it is hard to reconcile with the great law of Christ, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." We cannot see how that can be a lasting temporal good,

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[1] Ibid., August 20, 1835.

[2] Ibid., June 16, 1836.

[3] The original accusation was made by "Alquis" (from Alabama) in the issue of September 8, 1836; the editor's reply was in the September 15, 1836, issue. For the reply of the correspondent in East Tennessee see the October 13, 1836, issue.

> which appears to us to involve moral wrong. We cannot see any general agreement between the thing itself, and the soft-featured theories that profess to delineate it. We cannot be persuaded but a mill-stone is on our shoulders, and to dispute the fact, makes us more restive--still we prefer laying it down with caution, to crushing ourselves by attempting to dash it off at once.[1]

Whether his evaluation of sentiment at Maryville was accurate is difficult to say. The president, Isaac Anderson, was not in favor of slavery.[2] A note to the editor of The Emancipator indicated there was deep anti-slavery feeling at Maryville as late as 1838.[3] A letter to the American Presbyterian on the other hand contended that there were no more "-isms" (including abolitionism) in East Tennessee than in other parts of the South; the correspondent claimed to be a member of the New School.[4]

After the 1837 General Assembly the exact nature of anti-slavery sentiment in East Tennessee becomes impossible to assess with accuracy. The American Presbyterian, no longer attempting to conciliate those of New School persuasions in East Tennessee, became increasingly pro-slavery. The 1837 meeting of the Synod of Tennessee rejected the Assembly actions by 27 to 8; the 1838 Synod meeting professed adherence to the New School Assembly by a vote of 32 to 8, with only two of the eight negative votes those of ministers.[5]

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[1] Ibid., October 13, 1836.

[2] See Ralph W. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 80.

[3] "A letter from Maryville (Tennessee) Theological Seminary to the editor of The Emancipator, dated Feb. 27, 1838, says, 'at least one half of the students of this theological institution are decided Abolitionists, and are very much strengthened by perusing the publications sent by you.'" National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 17, 1840.

[4] American Presbyterian, June 28, 1838.

[5] E.T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 409-410.

If there was serious discussion about the possibility of forming a separate Southern Assembly, no hint of it has survived.

It is therefore impossible to know the extent of anti-slavery and pro-slavery sentiment, but there is indication that there continued to be some diversity on the subject in East Tennessee until the Civil War. Even while severing their connection with the New School Assembly in 1857 over the slavery issue, the Presbytery of Holston in East Tennessee, while denying that slavery was a sin, affirmed that "It is not a permanent or desirable institution, and is to be continued no longer than the good of the master and the slave require it."[1] Thus, while for practical purposes East Tennessee had lost its strong anti-slavery position by the end of the 1830's, it still refused to take the militant pro-slavery position that characterized the rest of the South.

Like their brethren in other areas of the South, therefore, the Presbyterians in the Old Southwest had abandoned any hint of anti-slavery opinion by the end of the 1830's. The stages of this development are more difficult to trace. However, it is clear that the rise of abolitionism in the North triggered a sharp reaction by Presbyterians in this area, and one of the most vocal pro-slavery apologists came from this area. The threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly likewise forced many to take a more definite pro-slavery position. Concern over such agitation led many to consider the formation of a separate Southern denomination, although by the time of the 1839 Old School Assembly such agitation had largely

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Holston (N.S.), 1857, quoted by E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 545.

vanished. Those who joined the New School Assembly from this area were also affected by the ecclesiastical struggles; labeled as anti-slavery by the Old School, they were forced to adopt a vocal pro-slavery position.

The one exception was East Tennessee. The area had a long tradition of anti-slavery sentiment, and the scanty evidence from the area indicates that this continued to some degree. However, the lack of an extensive plantation economy meant that Presbyterians in that area were not subject to the strong social pressures experienced by other Southern Presbyterians.

PART II. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

CHAPTER IV. PRESBYTERIANS AND SOUTHERN SOCIETY DURING THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Introduction

Church and Society: Religion as the Basis of Society

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CHAPTER FOUR

PRESBYTERIANS AND SOUTHERN SOCIETY DURING THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

During the period of transition in the various Synods of the South there was generally a reaffirmation of those aspects of the Church's relationship to American society which we have noted during the early period.[1] For example, Southern Presbyterians continued to emphasize that religion was the only firm basis for a stable society. Likewise, the doctrine continued to be stressed that the Church and the State were confined to separate spheres, and that each should not impinge on the sphere of the other. In addition, Southern Presbyterians demonstrated their commitment to a national, rather than sectional, stance in several events which threatened that position. In this chapter we shall examine each of these elements in turn, noting that, while the general pattern established during the early period continued during the period of transition, there were some subtle changes which were harbingers of later shifts in position. We shall also look at the close relationship between these changes and the transition which was occurring simultaneously on the slavery issue.

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[1] Supra, Part One, Chapter One.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY: RELIGION AS THE BASIS OF SOCIETY

The theme that religion must form the basis of a stable society received much attention during the period of transition. In South Carolina, for example, where the period of transition in the thinking of slavery began earlier than in other areas, the Missionary expressed its conviction that religion and civil prosperity were intimately related:

> That the peace, happiness and good order of society are eminently produced by the desemination of moral and religious instruction will be admitted by all who possess any respect for either. If virtue in the people is indispensible to the existence of a republican government, every necessary effort should be made for its inculcation and preservation. Throw off the restraints of religion, and laws would become powerless and inefficacious.[1]

Almost a decade later a similar sentiment was expressed by the Charleston Observer when it lamented the failure of many to keep the Sabbath, since the Sabbath was "the great moral conservator of nations."[2] Several years later Charles Colcock Jones told of a sermon preached to a group of emigrants for Liberia. In it he emphasized the necessity of a religious foundation for the life of their new country:

> ...the sure support of all social and civil happiness is Righteousness, as understood from the Scriptures--that in proportion as a people may be said to be righteous, in that proportion may they be said to be exalted, and under the protection of Heaven.[3]

A few years later the same preacher delivered an address to the senior class of Columbia Theological Seminary, which emphasized a similar theme. Speaking at a time when widespread financial

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[1] Missionary, February 2, 1821.

[2] Charleston Observer, November 5, 1831.

[3] Charleston Observer, July 6, 1833.

depression was descending on the nation, Jones said that true prosperity in the nation would only be found when the nation turned to God, for prosperity was dependent on the Gospel.[1]

Presbyterians in the Virginia-North Carolina area expressed similar sentiments. The Visitor and Telegraph (Richmond) declared that only religious influences could give a firm foundation to the law of the nation:

> How shall vice be suppressed and every good purpose be promoted in America? Can the supreme authority of law--of legislative enactment, remove existing evils which are hostile to the prosperity and best good of our country?...No! Every one may see that the authority of law can do nothing, unless that law is based on the moral feelings of the people, and is of itself the honest expression of their sentiments....What is done by the arm of government in other countries must here be done by the PEOPLE. Pious youths must be sought out and educated and the ordinances of the gospel must be supported by the united will and voice and efforts of the people. This must be done, or the history of our country and our government will be like that of many others: The day will at length come, when a tempest raised by the unbridled passions of wisked men will sweep over the land like a tornado, leaving behind one wide spreading desolate waste, exhibiting nothing on which the eye of God or man can repose with complacency.[2]

From a slightly different perspective the Southern Religious Telegraph (successor to the Visitor and Telegraph) declared that a society which refused to acknowledge God would be under His judgment:

> It is the duty of Christians to refute the atheistical sentiment, that nations are under no obligations to acknowledge God--that in their national capacity they may go on and do very well without God...this acknowledgment God claims of nations no less than of individuals. And no government can set aside his claims with im-

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[1] Charles C. Jones, Address to the Senior Class in the Theological Seminary of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, on the Evening of the Anniversary, Columbia, July 10, 1837, (Savannah: Thomas Purse & Co., 1837), pp. 11, 14-15.

[2] The Visitor and Telegraph, December 15, 1827. See also the issues of February 10, 1827, and March 30, 1828.

> punity....The denunciations of the Word of God against national impiety, are of a solemn and awful character, and they are repeated as warnings in various parts of the Bible.[1]

The American Presbyterian of Nashville expressed optimism about the effects of Christianity on society:

> It is much to the credit of Christianity, as claiming to be derived from the Maker of all things, that it contains, in its essential nature, a corrective for all that is wrong in single minds and the organization of society. Give to its pure principles a general controlling influence over the souls of men, and the difficulties will subside, in regard to single cases of the truth; be it in the practice of individuals or in the institutions of society.[2]

It is significant, however, that this statement occurred in the middle of an editorial decrying the schemes of Northern abolitionists. Whatever other reasons existed for the Southern Presbyterian hostility to abolitionism, one major cause was a deep conviction that the immediate abolition of slavery would result in social chaos. Although seldom directly stated, behind all Southern Presbyterian statements on religion as the basis of a stable society is the presupposition that a stable society is God's will. Conversely, social chaos must not be God's will. Therefore, abolitionism must not be God's will, and it is therefore acceptable--and even imperative--to oppose it.[3]

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, April 6, 1832.

[2] American Presbyterian, March 23, 1837.

[3] For an example of a Southern Presbyterian work which systematically developed this theme see our summary of George A. Baxter's work on abolition, supra, pp. 177-178.

The twin presuppositions--that a stable society was in every circumstance to be preferred to social chaos, and that abolitionism would lead to social chaos--were accepted uncritically. In regard to the latter, however, Southern Presbyterians pointed to the example of the British West Indies and the degradation of the free black population of America as demonstrations of the results of emancipation.

Thus we can see the difference between those statements on religion as the basis of society during the transition period and those of the early period. The difference was not in the statements themselves, but the use to which they could be put in combatting a new enemy, namely, abolitionism. Eventually Southern Presbyterians would embrace one threat to social stability--a civil war--to exterminate another threat--abolitionism.

THE RELATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

We have indicated that during the early period the major question was the influence the State should have on the Church. During the period of transition this no longer was of great consequence. Instead, serious attention was directed to the question of the Church's influence on the State and on society. The reasons for this shift in concern were undoubtedly numerous, but of central importance was the question of abolition.

Three aspects in particular are prominent in Southern Presbyterian discussions of Christianity and politics during this period. First, there was a reaffirmation of the doctrine of the separation of Church and State. Second, there was an increased recognition that this doctrine did not mean the Christian was to be completely non-political in character; there was, accordingly, greater attention paid to the question of the Christian's responsibility in his society. Finally, the problem of abolitionism had an impact on the development of Southern Presbyterian views of the Christian and society.

The separation of Church and State was taken for granted to a greater extent during this period; it was clear that there

was little reasonable expectation of any union taking place by this time. Nevertheless, a writer in the Southern Religious Telegraph placed the matter first on his list of duties owed to their country by Christians:

> You owe it to your country, as well as to the church of Christ, to preserve it free from a union of Church and State. I need not dwell on this point. For this is a principle in our system, and the only principle on which there is perfect unanimity of sentiment among the people.[1]

The separation of Church and State had another dimension, however. This was the conviction that the Church as an institution had no right to interfere in political matters. Southern Presbyterian newspapers, for example, constantly disavowed any intention of interfering with political questions. The Missionary (Georgia) stated:

> We are not in the habit of interfering with political affairs--and have never chained ourselves to the car of any leader, or linked our destiny with any party. To be honest and independent, and at the same time to support those schemes with which are entwined the intelligence, and prosperity, and honour of the State, have ever been our aim.[2]

The Evangelical Museum, published briefly in North Carolina, made a similar declaration:

> For ourselves, we belong to no party, unless to belong to none, constitutes a party. On every question, whether in Congress or the cabinet, we sincerely wish that all regard to any consideration but the good of our dear country, as it may be affected by the contemplated measure, could be kept entirely out of view.[3]

During the nullification controversy in South Carolina the Charles-

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, April 6, 1832.

[2] Missionary, March 30, 1821.

[3] Evangelical Museum, March, 1828.

ton Observer made occasional comments on the course of the political crisis; one reader demanded that his subscription be stopped because the paper had become involved in politics. The editor defended his policy, saying he had spoken only against the evils caused by the strife, not on the political aspects.[1] The Southern Religious Telegraph likewise received criticism for allegedly taking a political stand on the crisis, but a correspondent complimented the editor "that in these respects there has been for several months past, in my judgment, a manifest and great improvement...."[2] Later, the Watchman of the South declared its policy in regard to political matters:

> We have lately been politely presented with a political pamphlet. Our thanks are due for this courtesy. But we do not meddle with politics in our journal. As private persons, we claim a right to think and speak and act for our country's good, on all questions which arise. But the pulpit and the religious press have matters of higher moment demanding their attention.[3]

Individual opinion on political matters was indeed acknowledged as a right, but at times Southern Presbyterians seemed wary of the dangers of politics. A brief letter to the Charleston Observer questioned whether or not a clergyman ought to be seen at a political gathering.[4] The same paper carried the testimony of a man who had become active in politics, but had seen the danger of such involvement to his spiritual life and had forsaken his political interest.[5] One of the marks of

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[1] Charleston Observer, February 9, 1833.

[2] Southern Religious Telegraph, September 7, 1832.

[3] Watchman of the South, November 7, 1839.

[4] Charleston Observer, October 6, 1832.

[5] Ibid., August 16, 1828.

a true revival in a church was seen to be a decline in political involvement; this was especially true of churches in South Carolina during the nullification controversy.[1]

Despite such suspicions, however, more attention was given to the responsibility of the Christian in the political realm. If the two positions were adopted that religion was the basis of a stable society, and that Church and State were separate, a problem was immediately apparent. How was religion to make an impact on society, if the Church was not to take part in those movements that were shaping a society? The answer was that the individual Christian was to make his own impact on society. While this had been acknowledged earlier, it took on new significance as the democratic trends of American society increased. This was indicated by John Holt Rice shortly before his death:

> Presbyterians have a plain course to pursue: and if they will let every thing alone but their own proper business, they will do well. Their proper business is to endeavour to make their fellow men good christians; in full confidence that if a man is a good christian, he will be a good citizen, a good neighbour, friend, father, &c. I am satisfied that we do not generally confide enough in the power of religion; and, therefore, endeavour to carry it directly to the accomplishment of many things which had better be let alone.[2]

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[1] For examples see ibid., October 1 and October 22, 1831; June 16, 1832; April 26, 1834. See also the accounts of several revivals held under Daniel Baker. William M. Baker, The Life and Labours of the Rev. Daniel Baker, D.D., Pastor and Evangelist. (Philadelphia: William S. and Alfred Martien, 1858), pp. 158-159, 166.

[2] John Holt Rice to Francis Bowman, March 17, 1830, in Maxwell, op. cit., p. 373. On occasion Southern Presbyterians hinted at some dissatisfaction with the democratic trends which were occurring. This was given clearest expression by John Holt Rice in a letter written just before the 1828 presidential election (in which Andrew Jackson was elected): "There is another view of affairs which alarms me. From time immemorial, the world has been governed by the few. But it seems as if it would be so no longer. The

If it were granted that the individual Christian was the means by which Christianity was to make an impact on society, it followed logically that the Church had some responsibility in training the individual Christian as to the nature of his responsibilities. How to do this without involving the Church as a corporate entity in politics was a thorny problem, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that most efforts were confined to general exhortations about applying Christian principles to politics. Generally, the duties of a Christian in the political realm which were expounded during this time can be grouped under six categories.

First, it was clear from Scripture that a basic duty was to pray for those in authority. A letter to the Southern Christian Sentinel condemned the failure of many ministers to pray publically for political leaders:

> This deficiency, I have noticed in every branch of Zion, and in every part of our land--and I have wondered, once and again, what could be the cause. I have conjectured it to be this--that, prayer for rulers had come to be regarded as participating too much of a political character, to render it suitable as a constituent part of the public devotions of the sanctuary. ...Party politics, as such, I admit, should never constitute a component part of the exercises of the pulpit....But the whole aspect of the Bible--the entire bearing of its prescriptions,

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power is every where passing into the hands of the multitude. They feel this, and will not be slow to assert their privilege, and put forth their strength. This would all be well, if the multitude were wise and virtuous. ...But the infelicity is, that population far outruns improvement; and the desire of the people to hold and exercise power is awakened up, before education and moral discipline have prepared them for the work." John Holt Rice to Rev. B.B.Wisner, November 22, 1828, quoted in Maxwell, op. cit., p. 381. It is clear that such a position would look with deep suspicion on any movement to emancipate the slaves, who were universally uneducated.

> is favourable to some reference to national affairs, and to public men--nay, it ought to be added, even obligatory.[1]

Second, Christians had a duty to be informed of political issues, so that they could arrive at intelligent decisions. An article in the Charleston Observer spoke of this, and also urged as a logical conclusion that religious papers should include political news:

> The people themselves are the real rulers of the country. It is true they act by delegates: but this circumstance renders it their imperious duty to be so well acquainted with civil affairs to know how to choose them. Ignorance and indifference on this subject are alike reprehensible. A great many read no other than religious papers, and therefore have no other means of attaining the qualifications essential to them as members of the Republic. It is but an act of courtesy in those who possess other means to yield this small tribute to those who are still without them.[2]

On the whole Southern Presbyterian papers carried a comprehensive summary of foreign and domestic news in each issue. However, editors rarely spoke openly in their editorial columns about political issues.[3]

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[1] Southern Christian Sentinel, June 1, 1839.

[2] Charleston Observer, June 26, 1830.

[3] There were, however, exceptions on occasion. The editor of the Charleston Observer, for example, supported the enforced removal of the Cherokees from Georgia, although saying the plan was not the best possible solution. (July 3, 1830). The Southern Christian Herald supported the Florida Campaign (February 17, 1836), while the Charleston Observer spoke with horror of the war and urged stronger action to bring peace to the area (May 14, May 21, 1836). The Charleston Observer condemned the activity of the Western nations in the Chinese opium trade (October 19, 1839), and the Watchman of the South urged political action to raise the wages of women (August 29, 1839). Also in the category of political questions might be placed the support of the American Peace Society and similar movements which sought to abolish war as a part of government policy. (Southern Religious Telegraph, July 22, 1831; Charleston Observer, September 7, 1833 and May 10, 1834;

A third aspect of the Christian's obligation in society more directly involved the application of Christian discernment. This was the affirmation that some political issues also involved moral issues; these moral issues should be discerned and the weight of Christian opinion should be brought to bear on them. This was in reality an extremely important point, although its significance was not seen at the time. Two aspects of the question made it important especially. First, by implication many political issues did not involve moral or ethical issues. For example, the decision to build a new railroad was not seen as having any moral implications; if the contractors on the road took a bribe, however, then a moral issue was involved.[1] Second, there was necessarily an inherent difficulty: who was to decide whether a given political issue had moral implications, and by what standards would that decision be made? Some issues were clearly both moral and political to Southern Presbyterians. A prime example was the temperance cause. The Charleston Observer printed an address by Thomas Grimke declaring that temperance was the best way a person could practice Christian patriotism.[2]

American Presbyterian, March 26, 1835, September 22 and 29, 1836). The main categories of editorial comments involving politics, however, were those which were concerned with abolition and sectionalism.

[1]This should be qualified by noting that any political action would be weighed in light of the Presbyterian understanding of the purpose of human government, especially in regard to its obligation to work for the common good.

[2]Charleston Observer, March 23, March 30, and April 6, 1833. Grimke was not a Presbyterian, but the address was delivered in the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston. He was also apparently a close friend of Benjamin Gildersleeve, the editor of the paper.

The editor of the same paper urged the legal establishment of temperance, and gave a list of eight positive effects on society such an action would have.[1] A correspondent of the Southern Religious Telegraph spoke of the nature of the temperance cause in its political aspects:

> The Temperance Societies are interferring very seriously with a political question--and for advocating their principles you are liable to be called a political offender. Our government has authorized the sale and free use of ardent spirits....In supporting and disseminating the principles of the Temperance Society, are you not opposing principles and practices which are permitted and supported by our political governments?[2]

The same correspondent suggested that actions of church courts in recommending the colonization cause also involved the Church in politics, as did the Church's concern about governmental Indian policies. In the same issue another letter took a similar stand on the problem of political issues:

> In exercising the discipline of the Church must every thing in politics, and arising out of politics, pass unnoticed, for fear of incurring the charge of "uniting Church and State?" For instance--the indulgence of violent party heat--misrepresenting the motives, words and actions of those who happen to differ from them in opinion--accusing their christian brethren of intentionally remaining ignorant of the truth, or of wilfully stating untruths--indecorous comparisons--vulgar abuse? &c.[3]

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[1] Ibid., September 22, 1832. For other statements urging legislative action on temperance see "Narrative of the State of Religion in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia", Charleston Observer, December 18, 1830; American Presbyterian, January 8 and February 2, 1838.

[2] Southern Religious Telegraph, September 7, 1832.

[3] Ibid. The letter was signed "An Inquirer".

In short, therefore, there was an acknowledgement that some issues, at least, would necessarily involve the Church in political issues. On the whole these were matters which affected individual morality as well as the broader character of society, but not all can be fitted into this category. However, the main problem was that there was no clear definition of what made a political issue also a moral issue (and therefore of interest to the Church). At no point during this period was this clearer than in discussions about the Church and slavery. Almost as soon as slavery agitation became prominent within the Church during the period of transition Southern Presbyterians adopted the position that slavery was a political matter only, and therefore beyond the bounds of the Church. This did not mean that it did not have moral aspects; such matters as the treatment of slaves and their religious instruction were legitimate areas of the Church's concern. With the institution of slavery itself, however, the Church had no jurisdiction. It was partly for this reason that Southern Presbyterians had so little common ground with the abolitionists, who proclaimed that slavery was a moral issue and could therefore be branded as sinful. With no broad underlying definition of precisely what constituted a moral issue it is not difficult to see why the General Assembly found it easier to take the path of least resistance on the issue of slavery. It is significant that the question of what constituted a moral issue, and whether or not slavery was a moral issue, received very little serious attention in the South.

The fourth aspect of the Christian's duty as a citizen was a concern that law and order be maintained. The American

Presbyterian, commenting on the death at the hands of a mob of the abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy, condemned the breakdown of the law:

> We are for the liberty and protection of men, as set forth in the laws of their country....Any infraction or departure from the due course of the law, thus established, and secured to every individual, must ever be attended with alarming forebodings, and should be deprecated by every friend to civil and religious liberty.[1]

A few weeks later the same paper criticised the President's State of the Union message for failing to deal with the problem of mob rule.[2] The Charleston Observer likewise deplored the breakdown of law and order, saying that even a despotism would be better than mobocracy.[3]

A fifth Christian obligation was indirectly connected with the fourth duty. The Christian should avoid extremes in politics, and especially the dangers of partisan excitement; failure to do so was indirectly undermining the stability of society. A letter to the Charleston Observer spoke of the dangers:

> The Christian may take an interest, and ought to take an interest in public affairs--nay, he ought to maintain a ceaseless jealousy over the Constitution and freedom of his country; but a constant, and noisy, and factious meddling in party politics, is as injurious to his own personal religion, as it is to the interest of piety in general. We do not cease to be Christians when we become politicians. It is

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[1] American Presbyterian, November 16, 1837. The depth of feeling about the question of law and order is seen in the fact that Southern Presbyterian papers uniformly condemned the death of Lovejoy, in spite of their opposition to his work. See Charleston Observer, November 25 and December 2, 1837; Southern Christian Herald, December 1, 1837; Southern Religious Telegraph, November 24, 1837.

[2] American Presbyterian, December 14, 1837.

[3] Charleston Observer, August 22, 1835. See also the issue for August 20, 1836.

> with politics, as with money: it is not the temperate use, but the immoderate love of it, that is the root of all evil.[1]

More direct was the statement of the editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph:

> ...it is very improper for christians to become the advocates of party politics--the warm partisans of a favorite candidate. When one imbibes this partisan spirit to such a degree as to enlist in the work of electioneering for his favorite, it is evidently injurious to his growth in piety; it blinds his understanding, biases his judgment, the gospel loses its power on his heart and life; and it is well if he is not so far led away by the demon of politics as to be making stump orations to kindle the passions of the many and enlist them in the same unholy warfare. ...The gospel does not authorise christians to engage in political feuds for the sake of electing to office, even good men. They are not permitted to do evil that good may come.[2]

A final duty for Christians was the obligation to vote, and more specifically to vote for men who would uphold Christian principles in their lives and offices. The Southern Religious Telegraph spoke of this duty:

> In a government like ours, where civil magistrates are chosen by the people, it is, in our view, the duty of christians to unite their influence and their suffrages with those of their fellow-citizens who wish to elect men of integrity and good principles for rulers, men whose example and influence will favor the diffusion of christianity and good morals through the community.--If gamblers and scoffers and duellists are the rulers of a people, that people will suffer for it as surely as iniquity brings down the judgments of the Almighty.[3]

The Charleston Observer took a similar stand:

> In exercising his elective franchise he should give his voice for the elevation of those, and of those only, to places of honor and trust, in whom he can

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[1] Ibid., August 13, 1831.

[2] Southern Religious Telegraph, May 29, 1830.

[3] Ibid.

> confide as intelligent, virtuous and wise. Christians are interested in having good rulers and good laws, and we do not know that they are discharging their duty to themselves, to their country, or their God, if they neglect to give their suffrages, when they might secure the object for which they pray.[1]

In summary, the period of transition saw more attention being directed at the question of the Church's relationship to society, particularly in the area of the individual Christian's political responsibility. The discussion of such issues, however, was frequently colored by the issue of abolition, and in subtle but important ways the conclusions of such discussions were made to conform with the Southern understanding of slavery.

The subtle shift in opinion is seen especially in three ways. In the first place, Southern Presbyterians continued their tradition of affirming that religion was the foundation of a stable society; as we have suggested, behind this is the presupposition that the stable society is that which most nearly conforms to God's will. Therefore, political and social instability should be condemned by the Christian. In the period of transition, however, this conviction was used as a justification for continuing slavery; abolition, it was felt, would lead to social chaos.

Secondly, during the period of transition there was a fresh examination of the role the Church should play in political matters, with the conclusion that such questions were beyond the jurisdiction of the Church except when moral issues were clearly involved. At the same time, since religion was the basis of a stable society, it was affirmed that the individual Christian had definite political duties. Again, however, the issue of slavery influenced the Church's thinking. Unwilling to become entangled in the problem of slavery, the Church

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[1] Charleston Observer, July 31, 1830.

affirmed that such issues were beyond the scope of its corporate interest. No united action by the Church was therefore to be expected on the question of slavery.

The third point is closely related to this. Under the pressure of prevailing attitudes, the Church removed slavery from the list of issues with which it was concerned. It was considered a political issue only, not a moral issue; its continuance, therefore, was solely a pragmatic matter. In the early period Southern Presbyterians had considered that they had the right to speak in an official capacity on the matter of slavery; now it was a purely civil matter.

In conclusion, rather than allowing theology to determine social attitudes, Southern Presbyterians began to allow social attitudes to remold theology.

SECTIONALISM AND SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS

We have noted that Southern Presbyterians consistently took a national, rather than sectional, stance in the early period of our study. During the period of transition there were three major challenges to this position; in each of them there was a tendency for some to allow sectional feelings to prevail, but such attitudes did not predominate and the consistent position of Southern Presbyterians remained national rather than regional.

The first challenge came during the difficulties which accompanied the debates over the Missouri Compromise.[1] An agent soliciting funds in Georgia for Princeton Seminary in 1819 found a general willingness on the part of Southerners to support the school. A year later, however, a return visit showed that the

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[1]Our concern here is with South Carolina and Georgia; in accordance with our chronological sequence the period of transition had commenced in those areas by this time, but not in other areas.

attitude had changed: "You may rest assured, dear sir, for objects beyond the Potomac the people here have no love---that dreadful Missouri question has done...mischief to this cause.[1]

Such a position did not prevail for long, however. The Missionary, a Presbyterian paper printed in Georgia, declared that the North and South were united by their common (and increasing) commitment to Christianity, and urged that political controversy should in no way be allowed to interfere with this unity.[2] At the same time, the paper declared that there was an unreasonable prejudice in the North against the South, and expressed the hope that such prejudices would be overcome so the two sections of the nation would draw closer together.[3] The Southern Evangelical Intelligencer, printed in Charleston by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, was devoted to news of the various benevolent projects of the day; its very nature, therefore, was opposed to a purely sectional viewpoint.

Of much greater importance was a second crisis, the controversy over nullification which gravely threatened the basic structure of the Union. Beginning as early as 1828 with the passage of a new tariff act by the Congress and the development of the doctrine of nullification by which a single state could declare an act null and void, the political issue reached a climax with the passage of an ordinance of nullification in

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[1] Samuel S. Davis to Samuel Miller, May 1, 1820. Quoted by Margaret Burr DesChamps, "Union or Disunion? Southern Presbyterians and Southern Nationalism, 1820-1861". Journal of Southern History, Vol. 20, p. 485. Her entire article is a useful brief survey of the subject of Presbyterians and sectionalism.

[2] Missionary, September 23, 1822.

[3] Ibid., July 15, 1822.

late 1832 by South Carolina. Included in the ordinance was the threat of secession from the Federal Union and appropriations for military equipment. The issue was not solved until a compromise was reached in early 1833.

Within South Carolina it seems clear that the controversy caused much disruption in some churches. The evidence for this is mainly seen in numerous comments in the Charleston Observer about the harmful effects of political agitation on the Church and the accounts given of revivals during the period which had a reconciling effect on churches formerly split by politics.[1] While there was, therefore, some degree of disagreement among Presbyterians, on the whole their position was Unionist. We have not discovered any leading Presbyterian in the State that was a Nullifier; on the other hand, several leading men took a firm Unionist stand.[2] James Henley Thornwell wrote a series

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[1] See supra, p. 225. J. Leighton Wilson, preparing to go to Africa as a missionary, declared, "Political affairs wear a most fearful aspect in South Ca.... to excite an interest in behalf of missions whilst there is so much commotion is hopeless." Quoted by DesChamps, "Union or Division?....", p. 490. William McDowell refused to accept an appointment as an agent to raise funds for Columbia Theological Seminary in South Carolina, declaring that such an effort would be futile in light of the political divisions: "In the present awful crisis--everything in our state is at this moment in a state of agitation....to embark on such an undertaking is appalling. In this situation I cannot materially help you by accepting your appointment." Quoted in William Childs Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 1831-1931. (Decatur, Georgia, privately printed, 1931), p. 22. The narrative of the state of religion of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia for 1832 expressed concern that "the indulgence of undue participation in political contentions" was having a detrimental effect on many churches. Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, p. 331.

[2] Hickey suggests that the young Benjamin Morgan Palmer was probably a Nullifier; he was not, however, an active Presbyterian until several years later. Doralyn J. Hickey, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Churchman of the Old South". Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1962, p. 20.

of newspaper articles against nullification.[1] The wife of Thomas Smyth spoke disparagingly of Columbia as "the hotbed of nullification, infidelity, and every other evil."[2]

More revealing was the position taken by Benjamin Gildersleeve through the columns of his paper, the Charleston Observer. Throughout the crisis Gildersleeve consistently expressed his opposition to the secession party in the State; it was one of the few occasions that he gave vent to political opinions. As early as 1830 he took notice of the agitation, declaring that it was his editorial policy to avoid political issues unless they touched moral issues as well. The bitterness and agitation in the political realm, however, were such that they must be condemned.[3] A few months later Gildersleeve wrote an extensive editorial on the controversy:

> In a country so extensive as this--and among a people so diversified in their habits, in their modes of thinking and acting, as well as in their pursuits, sectional interests must be expected to prevail at least to some extent; and as members of the same great family, there should be exercised, under such circumstances, a forbearance and a magnanimity which bespeak a great and generous people. ...Not that events may not occur which will render it both expedient and politic to sever the bonds of the family compact. But the ultimate resort--it is agreed on all hands--should not be made without maturely weighing the consequences....in

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[1]"I have now in the press a pamphlet, which will consist of about thirty pages, on Nullification. It will be published in May. Part of it has already appeared in the Columbia Hive, in a series of numbers, signed 'Clio'....I think it contains some strong arguments against Nullification." James H. Thornwell to A. H. Pegues, MS letter, April 19, 1832. Anderson-Thornwell Papers, University of South Carolina. The articles have not survived, and it seems probable the pamphlet was never published.

[2]Quoted in Smyth, Autobiography, p. 106.

[3]Charleston Observer, May 8, 1830.

> all times of excitement like the present, there are unprincipled men attached to both parties--men, who act under the influence of the maxim, that when they have an end to attain which they conceive to be good, the means for effecting it, however base in themselves, are justifiable and right....There are materials enough to keep alive the flame of contention. But of what use is it? Let an amnesty be thrown over the past--Let a general effort be made to bury in oblivion the animosity which has hitherto prevailed.[1]

Gildersleeve continued to criticise the practices of both parties in South Carolina (the "Nullifiers" and the "Unionists"), but at the same time he continued to urge that national feelings be given precedence over sectional considerations.[2] As the debate raged in the early weeks of 1833 he increased his expressions of concern. One issue, for example, reprinted an article from a Vermont newspaper on "The Perpetuity of the Republic."[3] The same issue included a letter which made an indirect but unmistakable reference to the political agitation and the threat of military action; the author declared that warfare never fulfilled its intended goals, and added:

> So seldom, indeed, does the least benefit accrue from contentions of any kind, that wise men will not only require good reasons, but very good reasons for engaging in them. Before the issue is made up, the cost should be counted. Even where rights are real, it does not prove that a contest to secure them is either judicious or wise.[4]

A few weeks later Gildersleeve commended the compromise worked out over the tariff issue.[5] After the matter was definitely

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[1] Ibid., October 16, 1830.

[2] See, for example, the issues of December 11, 1830, and September 8, 1832.

[3] Ibid., February 2, 1833.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., February 23, 1833.

settled he urged all "to bury the past in oblivion--to shun every thing that savours of recrimination, and to embrace each other as friends, and as fellow citizens...."[1] He continued:

> It certainly afford a subject for devout thanksgiving that HE who holds the hearts of all men in his hands, has disposed our Representatives to adopt such measures as make for peace. This interposition of his Providence at a time and in a way unexpected, should be held in grateful remembrance.[2]

The annual meeting of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia also remarked on the effect of decreased agitation:

> Envy and jealousy have been banished--strife has ceased ere it was matured--dissensions have not been known--the Lord has been with us and the mountains have flowed down at His presence.[3]

The same meeting of Synod elected Dr. Aaron Leland as professor of theology in Columbia Theological Seminary, a native of Massechusetts; the only other member of the faculty at the time was Dr. George Howe, also of Massachusetts. Robinson is undoubtedly correct in seeing in this action a conscious rejection of sectionalism by the Synod.[4]

Outside South Carolina, Southern Presbyterians seem to have taken an even more decided stand against the threat of disunion, although they were not as directly involved in the controversies and there are thus fewer contemporary references. Dr. Philip Lindsley wrote concerning one of his sons who was attempting to pass the entrance examinations at West Point:

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[1] Ibid., March 23, 1833.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, p. 376.

[4] W. C. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

> I wish him distinctly to understand that I shall receive him with as much kindness if he fails as if he succeeds. Indeed--I have no desire to make him a soldier--unless to fight nullifiers.[1]

The stand of at least one politician who can be identified as a Presbyterian shows the same position. James McDowell, whose speech in the Virginia Legislature against slavery has been noted previously,[2] strongly opposed nullification, saying also that the doctrine of peaceable secession was unconstitutional.[3]

Amasa Converse, editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph, first took oblique notice of the threats to the union by printing a note from a correspondent urging Christians to perform their political duties:

> In this land, religious men must enter the arena of politics--their responsibility to God and their love to their country requires them to enter it, as Christian citizens,--and if possible, to avert from this nation the evils of discord and disunion.[4]

Later Converse became more direct in his treatment of the problems:

> The attitude in which one of the members of the Confederacy appears, cannot be contemplated with indifference. We hope that conciliatory measures may be devised, which shall restore harmony and allay excitement--and that nothing will be done to embroil our citizens in dissentions and strife, to impair or weaken the public confidence in our political institutions. Should these fail to secure the great ends contemplated in well-organized governments,--the failure will be followed with tremendous consequences: It must occasion incalculable injury to our country, to citizens of every class; and it will blight the hopes of the friends of liberty through the civilized world....At this time, while

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[1]Philip Lindsley to A. S. Lindsley, MS letter, January 7, 1833. John Overton Papers, University of North Carolina.

[2]Supra, pp. 159-160.

[3]DAB, Vol. 12, pp. 30-31.

[4]Southern Religious Telegraph, April 6, 1832.

> Congress and the Legislatures of many of the States are in session...it becomes good men to implore the blessing of Almighty God on their deliberations and on their country....
>
> Another duty of high import, is demanded of Christian citizens at such a crisis as the present--and it is nothing less than the sacrifice of sectional prejudices and jealousies on the altar of their Country's glory. The welfare of their country demands it.[1]

A few weeks later Converse again spoke of the crisis, and expressed pessimism about the long-term outcome of the basic issues involved:

> The crisis is at hand--but it may still be hoped that these storms of political strife will be in part, at least, averted; and though as a people we deserve the judgment, that God will save this nation from the horrors of civil war.
>
> Let none, however, imagine that lasting peace and harmony can be effected by the removal of the present causes of complaint....Unless the influences of Christianity shall be so generally disseminated through our country as to form a public sentiment which shall control the designs of ambitious leaders, --the scenes enacted in South Carolina, will no doubt be repeated.[2]

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[1] Ibid., December 7, 1832.

[2] Ibid., December 21, 1832. It might well be asked why Presbyterians seem to have been inclined toward a national stance, especially during the nullification controversy. There were undoubtedly a number of factors. Presbyterian theology in part was responsible; the teaching of the Confession on the divinely-ordained office of the magistrate, for example, would tend to dissuade rebellion, including secession. The national character of the General Assembly, with its yearly meetings fully attended by Southerners, gave Southern Presbyterians a sense of participation in the life of the whole nation. In like manner, Presbyterians had had a historical tradition of nationalism since the days of the American Revolution. The education and social position of many Presbyterians, frequently broadened by travel in the North and in Europe, would also have made them less provincial in outlook. Within South Carolina two special factors should not be overlooked. First, a large number of ministers in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia had strong ties with New England, either by birth or education or both. A survey by the Charleston Observer in 1833 showed that out of a total of ninty-four ministers, forty-five had either been born or educated in the North; an additional seven were of European origin, while

A third crisis which threatened to force Southern Presbyterians into a sectional stance was of a different type from the earlier political crises, and was in actuality a greater threat. This was the ecclesiastical controversy which climaxed in the Old School-New School division. We have noted previously the development in each geographical area of hostility toward anti-slavery agitation in the Church, and the threat expressed by many in the South to form a separate Southern General Assembly.[1] It is clear from this that the danger of ecclesiastical sectionalism was very real, and was only averted by the refusal to admit serious discussion on the issue in the General Assembly.

One further aspect of this controversy should be noted. During the debate in the South over the feasibility of forming a separate Assembly a major factor in determining the eventual outcome was the national stance of the vast majority of Southern Presbyterians. On one hand, those favoring a separate Assembly argued that such an action would have little effect on the Federal Union. This stance was most prevalent in South Carolina, as was typified by the Southern Christian Sentinel, the leading proponent of a separate Assembly:

> Nor shall I apprehend any civil or political evil, arising from such an organization. In the first

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forty-two were born and educated in the South. (Charleston Observer, October 5, 1833). Second, Presbyterians strongly opposed Dr. Thomas Cooper, the skeptical president of South Carolina College, and had even planned at one stage to erect a college of their own to counter his influence. In the nullification crisis Cooper was one of the most prominent advocates of the right of secession, and it is unlikely many Presbyterians would have wanted to be on the same sides of any issue with him.

[1] See especially supra, pp. 127-136.

> place, politicians do not think, nor do they care, half as much about Presbyterians as they sometimes imagine. And secondly, should it tend to weaken the bond of union, between the different sections of the country, it would only accord with the tendency of political events; and prepare the South for the worst, an independent position. A preparation, certainly, not to be despised. We should be prepared for any and every position--nor should we fear any into which we may be driven.[1]

In spite of its seeming pro-Union sentiment, this statement actually indicated a fairly strong sectional stance.

On the other hand, however, there was genuine concern on the part of most, even in South Carolina, that a sectional division would have detrimental effects on the Federal Union. Whether or not such statements were realistic in their exalted views of the influence of the Presbyterian Church is immaterial; the important thing is that there was deep conviction that a geographical division of the Church should be avoided because of its effects on the Union. Typical was the statement of a correspondent of the Charleston Observer:

> But, Sir, have you fully considered what is involved in this agitated subject in a political aspect? What is implied in a Southern Ecclesiastical organization?...It is...nothing more nor less that THE SEVERANCE OF THE UNION OF THESE UNITED STATES, ECCLESIASTICALLY--and Sir, I need not inform you, (what the first politicians in this country have frequently acknowledged,) that the Ecclesiastical union of the North and South with the East and West, is the strongest link in the golden chain that binds them--and that when that link is broken, the funeral knell is rung of that Union....Above all is this event to be consummated by Presbyterians?...Has their blood flowed freely for the purchanse of this Union, and should they be found the first, to cut the ship of the State from her moorings, to sever the strongest chain that holds her to her anchor...?[2]

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[1] Southern Christian Sentinal, March 23, 1839.

[2] Letter of "Justice," Charleston Observer, March 9, 1839.

To the various factors which determined the course of Southern Presbyterians during the Old School-New School controversy, therefore, should be added the national stance of the vast majority.

It would be false to give the impression that there was no sectional feeling among Southern Presbyterians during the period of transition, for such was not the case. During much of the period there was, instead, an increase in anti-Northern sentiment, although by the end of the period it had subsided.

This was especially clear in the increased support given to Southern educational institutions, in which a major motive was the desire to insure a sufficient supply of Southern men for the ministry. As early as 1826 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia had noted that few Northern men would come South as ministers.[1] In the same year the Presbytery of

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[1] "We have too long looked to the North for a supply. The many vacancies that there occur, and the vast openings to the West, are more than sufficient to employ all the ministers that can be educated at the North, for more than a hundred years to come; and there seems to be little in the South inviting to our Northern brethren. They dread our climate--our summers are considered as fatal to strangers. They also in general exceedingly dislike the domestic circumstances of our country, and few can reconcile it to their feelings to settle permanently in the South...." Report of the Missionary Society of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, 1826, quoted in G. Howe, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 413. Note also the statement from the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia in comparing Princeton with the proposed Seminary: "...the difference of habits and feelings on many subjects at Princeton from those formed and entertained among ourselves and other circumstances that need not be particularly detailed appear to the Synod fully to justify, and in some degree to require, that a vigorous and steady effort should be made toward an establishment of this institution within our bounds." Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, November, 1825, Vol. 1, pp. 123-124.

Fayetteville noted that four Southern men had been received as candidates, and commented that it was good to see men used to Southern climate and habits becoming candidates.[1] Plans for Columbia Theological Seminary were formulated at this time; promotional literature emphasized that the school would be Southern in character.[2] In 1828 a minister in Georgia noted there was much prejudice against Northern ministers who had settled in the South, although he felt sincere ones were accepted by the people.[3] The anti-Northern feelings engendered by the nullification controversy increased the desire for Southern ministers.[4] It is of interest that Columbia Theological Seminary received the majority of its initial funds from non-Presbyterians in South Carolina, apparently eager to aid any Southern educational endeavor.[5] In Virginia, Union Theological Seminary passed through difficult days after the death of John Holt Rice in 1831; one professor lamented that

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[1] Family Visitor, November 11, 1826.

[2] W. C. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

[3] Charleston Observer, September 6, 1828. For other similar statements see the issues of January 27 and March 17, 1827.

[4] The Charleston Observer defended Northern ministers in Southern pulpits, although acknowledging that Southern men were more likely to be accepted. See the issues of October 5, 1833, and November 7, 1835. The latter article especially emphasized the importance of Southern ministers to allay suspicions about abolitionism. A correspondent took exception to the paper's stand, saying that the Southern Church should look to the South for its ministers as a matter of patriotism. Charleston Observer, October 19, 1833. See also a similar, although less sectional, letter in the issue of November 9, 1833.

[5] W. C. Robinson, op. cit., p. 29.

the seminary would have to be improved or all the men would go North for their education.[1] This was unacceptable to most Virginia Presbyterians, however, and the Seminary managed to keep open in spite of a deep division in its faculty in the Old School-New School controversies. George A. Baxter, Rice's replacement as professor of theology, said shortly after coming to the Union faculty that the most alarming problem facing the Southern Church was the dearth of Southern theological students.[2]

The same desire for Southern institutions to train Southerners was evident on the college level also. The Southern Religious Telegraph noted that in light of Northern meddling with Southern affairs it was gratifying to report that Hampden-Sidney College was prospering more than ever.[3] In Mississippi, the founders of Oakland College likewise found many ready to support the school in the face of Northern abolitionism:

> Oakland is going ahead. The Natchez folks have beat us all to Smash, nine names gv. $35,500. Thanks to the abolitionists for this. I hope the current of education will be kept from running up stream.[4]

The clamor for Southern men in the pulpit did not continue, however, with any great force. A letter written from Columbia, South Carolina, to Massachusetts in 1837 indicated that prejudice was already on the decline:

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[1]Hiram Goodrich to Francis McFarland, MS letter, February 8, 1831. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2]George A. Baxter to Francis McFarland, MS letter, October 17, 1834. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[3]Southern Religious Telegraph, October 2, 1835.

[4]Matthew Bolls to James Smylie, MS letter, January 27, 1837. Joseph A. Montgomery Family Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

> Your Brother says that he knows the lady you mention--Mrs. Tillinghast--he thinks he remembers her--& begs me to say to you that you can tell her Son, that he will find no unpleasant feelings or prejudices in our Seminary here at all, not acting now, as they did in Nullification times--there is great harmony in the Seminary, both among the Professors & Students--& the feeling in Columbia not at all adverse to young men from the north.[1]

At the same time, very few men from the North actually came South for their theological education.[2] Furthermore, men who had been born or educated in the North but came South increasingly felt compelled to prove their attachment to Southern customs, and some of the most aggressive pro-slavery men in the following decades were men who were not native to the South.

In summary, three major items emerged during the period of transition in regard to sectionalism among Southern Presbyterians. First, in major controversies, both secular and ecclesiastical, most Southern Presbyterians took a national, rather than sectional, stance. The greatest threat was from ecclesiastical sources, but the national stance of the majority of Southern Presbyterians caused them to seek a solution which would avert a sectional Church.

Second, the period of transition saw an increase in what might be termed de facto sectionalism among Southern Pres-

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[1] C. Blanding to Mrs. Lucy Carpenter, MS letter, October 13, 1837. Blanding Papers, University of South Carolina.

[2] See, for example, the lists of students, with their birthplace and educational backgrounds, for Columbia Seminary in LaMotte, op. cit., pp. 298-306. A similar list for Union Seminary will be found in Walter W. Moore, ed., Centennial Catalogue of the Trustees, Officers, Professors and Alumni of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1807-1907. (Richmond, Whittet & Shepperson, 1907), pp. 42-80. Both show very few students from the North from the 1830's to the Civil War.

byterians, and an increased reliance on Southern schools to supply men who would be acceptable to the South.

Third, it was clear that the major danger to the national stance of Southern Presbyterians was the issue of abolition. The greatest increase in sectional feeling occurred at those times when they felt most threatened by the slavery issue. Conversely, the decline in abolitionist agitation in the Church by the end of the 1830's marked a new surge of strength in the national stance of Presbyterians in the South.

The picture during the period of transition, therefore, was somewhat diverse. On one hand, convictions about the relation of the Church to society which had been evident in the early period were reinforced. On the other hand, it was clear that new forces, especially abolitionism, were at work which threatened, and to some extent changed, some of those convictions. In the two decades preceeding the Civil War these convictions would be submitted to increasing pressure.

PART III. THE LATER PERIOD

CHAPTER I. THE SOLID SOUTH: SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS IN THE 1840'S

Presbyterians and Slavery in the 1840's: the Negative Reaction

Presbyterians and Slavery in the 1840's: the Positive Response

Presbyterians and Dissent on Slavery

Sectionalism and Nationalism in the 1840's

PART THREE

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOLID SOUTH: SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS IN THE 1840's

In comparison with the previous decade, the 1840's for Southern Presbyterians were what might be called "the quiet years." Basic attitudes on slavery and sectionalism which had solidified by the end of the 1830's would remain constant in the 1840's, and in the case of slavery, those attitudes would be buttressed by the development of a strong pro-slavery apologetic. To term the 1840's as "quiet years" would be somewhat misleading, however, for Southern Presbyterians found it necessary to contend with a constant barrage of criticism on slavery; their position on sectionalism also underwent a period of strain during the years of the Mexican War. We shall examine first the reaction of Presbyterians in the South to slavery during the decade, and will then turn to their attitudes in regard to sectionalism. We shall conclude our study of the 1840's by looking briefly at slavery and sectionalism among New School Presbyterians.

PRESBYTERIANS AND SLAVERY IN THE 1840's

By 1840 there was no longer any noteworthy diversity among Presbyterians in the South on the question of slavery. The editor of the Watchman of the South made this clear in speaking of Northern abolitionist agitations:

The people of the South have but one mind on the great

> They are determined to oppose all interference with their own peculiar affairs. They will not be dictated to, nor influenced (except to stronger determinations of resistance) by threats and slanders and abuse. The sooner all men in the "North Countrie" understand this and act accordingly, the more quiet they will probably have at home. As to us, their skyrockets, which blaze so luminously where fired off, do neither reach nor enlighten, amuse, nor alarm us.[1]

His analysis was an accurate prophecy of the Southern Presbyterian position during the entire decade in regard to slavery. Whereas previously there had been at least limited internal discussion on the matter of slavery in the South, by 1840 the unanimity in the Southern Church meant that the only criticism came from outside. For practical purposes Southern Presbyterians were immune to this type of agitation, and it only had the effect of hardening their position. The editor's wish that anti-slavery agitation would cease and that the South would be allowed to see after its own affairs, however, was unrealistic. The 1840's were years of increased and persistent anti-slavery agitation, and much of it involved Southern Presbyterians.

The reaction of Presbyterians in the South to abolitionism in the 1840's took two forms. One was what might be called a negative reaction; this was the constant and unswerving anti-abolitionism which sought to discredit every aspect of the abolitionist position. The second might be called a positive reaction; this was the development of a strong pro-slavery apologetic which not only saw slavery as permitted by Scripture but as a positive good designed and sanctioned by God. We shall look at these two reactions in turn.

The anti-abolitionism of the Southern Church was directed at two sources of agitation. The first was the domestic agitation on slavery from the North, which had been opposed by Southern Presbyter-

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[1] Watchman of the South, April 9, 1840.

ians almost since its inception. The second, however, was relatively new; this was the anti-slavery agitation from foreign sources, particularly Ireland and Scotland. Each of these sources included both secular and ecclesiastical elements, and, while there was sharp reaction to both, Southern Presbyterians not unnaturally felt more directly threatened by ecclesiastical anti-slavery elements.

Southern Presbyterians by the 1840's no longer considered anti-slavery societies a serious threat to the South. The usual method of dealing with such anti-slavery sources, therefore, was to ridicule them. A student at Columbia Theological Seminary discussed the major characteristics of the present age, and noted that foremost it was "distinguished above all others for the wildness of its speculations....Is any new theory started? It is only necessary that it should be supremely ridiculous, and multitudes, led on by an eager irrepressible desire for novelties, will immediately hail it...." Among the movements which symbolized this "wildness" was abolitionism, which was grouped with such other movements as phrenology and animal magnetism.[1] Southern Presbyterian editors took gleeful notice of the contentions and divisions which tore the anti-slavery movement. Benjamin Gildersleeve, editor of the Charleston Observer, noted the 1840 meeting of one group:

> From the report of their proceedings which has reached us, they are a disjointed and crumbling body--bitterly contending among themselves--greatly in debt--and without any resources to meet the demands against them, and with a constantly decreasing number, who are at all disposed to show them the least countenance or favor. With them the grand climacterick is passed, and they are fast sinking....[2]

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[1] Charleston Observer, August 22, 1840.

[2] Ibid., May 23, 1840.

Later he again expressed optimism that organized abolitionism was in its last stages:

> It is a species of fanaticism so at war with itself, as to achieve nothing. And well for the peace of the country that it is thus broken into minute factions. With all their labor, and zeal, and combinations in the last ten years, their prospects of ultimate success are darker now than ever.[1]

The editor of the Watchman of the South likewise took note of the internal problems of the anti-slavery movement, and painted them in the most lurid terms:

> The anniversary of the Anti-Slavery Society resembled the orgies of old. It presented a disgraceful scene of confusion, billingsgate, and indecent uproar--Garrison and Denison had a fierce controversy, and from the argumentum ad hominem, nearly came to the argumentum pugilatoris.[2]

In like manner, it was also argued that abolitionism inevitably led to numerous other dangerous views. The Watchman of the South gave a full report of an anti-Sabbath lecture by Garrison, indicating that such behavior could only be expected from an abolitionist.[3] A few years later the editor of the Southern Presbyterian gave his readers a report of an anti-Sabbath convention in Boston:

> We are prepared, however, upon reflection, to expect such a movement from just such sources, when we consider the radical principles of the men, and the evil communications with which their manners have been corrupted. When such men as W. Loyd (sic) Garrison lead the way...there need then be no surprise at any thing that is either said or attempted. We are glad that those men have at last thrown off the mask; have shown forth their true spirit. That their principles were infidel, and their radical tendency subversive of all organizations human and divine, we have long believed.[4]

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[1] Ibid., February 19, 1842.

[2] Watchman of the South, May 16, 1844.

[3] Ibid., March 7, 1844.

[4] Southern Presbyterian, February 16, 1848.

The Charleston Observer quoted comments of Gerrit Smith which urged slaves to escape, and to appropriate anything they would need in their flight from their masters:

> What a capital comment upon the morality of Abolitionism.... Steal! rob! plunder! without compromise or remorse! Do it as a justifiable act--nay murder too! for this is the necessary inference from the advice given. Comment upon the morality of such a principle as is here advanced, is needless.[1]

In short, any activity by abolitionists was treated with derision or scorn, and was relegated to the same category as any activity of a lunatic fringe which was only dangerous if taken seriously. William Lloyd Garrison was sarcastically termed "That phenomenon of meekness and gentlemanly courtesy" for his attacks on the Old School General Assembly.[2] The Watchman and Observer noted with relief that the abolitionist paper printed by Cassius M. Clay in Kentucky had been forced to close, and called it "an intolerable nuisance."[3] The Charleston Observer in similar manner spoke derisively of a visitor from Massachusetts who was attempting to "enlighten" Charleston on slavery.[4] The Watchman and Observer even gave an unfavorable review to a book published in the North which was supposedly pro-slavery, but the editor found it too mild: "Instead of going too far in defense of slaveholders, he goes as far as any man ought on the other side."[5]

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[1] Charleston Observer, February 26, 1842.

[2] Watchman of the South, June 27, 1844.

[3] Watchman and Observer, August 28, 1845. The Watchman of the South and the Charleston Observer merged in mid-1845 under the editorship of Benjamin Gildersleeve. His attempt to make the paper serve the areas previously covered by the two papers was unsuccessful; in mid-1847 the Southern Presbyterian appeared in South Carolina and largely took over the territory of the old Charleston Observer.

[4] Charleston Observer, December 28, 1844.

[5] Watchman and Observer, November 20, 1845.

Southern editors also took notice of indications that abolitionism was falling into disfavor in the North. The Watchman of the South reprinted several items from Northern papers which were anti-abolitionist in character, and the paper urged the North to fight abolitionism, saying that "they will attack and devour your most precious institutions.[1] The Watchman and Observer expressed optimism that the North was abandoning abolitionism and tending to favor colonization.[2]

Occasional notice was also given to foreign abolitionism, although not as much as that of the North. The Watchman and Observer took note of British efforts to stop the slave trade along the coast of Africa, and contended that Britain was still engaged in the slave trade:

> ...we must own that the boisterous and trumpet-tongued philanthropy of England at the present day, excites but mingled feelings of indignation and disgust....these immaculate Philanthropists are loud in their denunciations of slavery in this country, and send us missionary abolitionists, and shut their pulpits against our ministers, who may happen to reside in slaveholding States, and denounce the slave dealer as a Pirate, while actually engaged in the same business under false colors. So much for the honesty of English Abolitionists! But it is always the man with the beam in his own eye, that is so extremely ready to offer his services to take the mote out of his brother's eye.[3]

The same paper also affirmed that women workers in the factories of Great Britain were held in virtual bondage:

> The slaves of the United States do not perform one half the labor which the female slaves of England do in twenty-four hours....whether or not their fingers bleed and ache,

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[1]See Watchman of the South, January 19, 1843, and August 11, 1844, for examples of such reprints. The quotation is found in the August 29, 1844, issue.

[2]Watchman and Observer, September 30, 1847. A similar view will be found in the Watchman of the South, August 27, 1840.

[3]Watchman and Observer, November 27, 1845.

> or sharp pains shoot across their chest, toil they must, not only week day, but often on the Sabbath day.[1]

Along somewhat different lines, the Charleston Observer noted closely the Irish Repeal movement, and claimed that it was intimately linked with abolitionism since Daniel O'Connell had made various statements backing the American anti-slavery movement.[2]

Not all, however, felt that abolitionism was on the decline or that it was devoid of power. A letter to Rev. William Henry Ruffner spoke of the danger facing the nation:

> The first is abolition, and how? Not that any immediate danger is to be apprehended from the abolitionists attempting to coerce us to abolish slavery, but the cause is undoubtedly a growing one. It has been greatly fostered by the southern members of Congress by their silly adherence to the famous 24th rule by which abolition petitions are excluded from the house, and thereby giving them the opportunity of exclaiming against the infringment of the right of petition, and making capital for themselves and their cause by connecting the right of petition with abolition--as they increase in numbers they will increase in boldness & impudence and harrass and disturb us until they produce such a hatred between the north and the south as to render it impossible for them to tolerate each other under the same government....And as for a peaceable separation or dissolution of the Union, which we sometimes hear of, ... the feeling that will be found sufficient to dissolve the Union will prove adequate to produce civil war.[3]

Agitation over slavery from ecclesiastical sources disturbed the Southern Church in three main controversies in the 1840's. The first was a controversy involving a Presbyterian missionary from South Carolina working in Western Africa under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, John Leighton Wilson. The second involved attempts to raise the slavery issue in

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[1] Ibid., September 25, 1845.

[2] Charleston Observer, July 1 and November 25, 1843; July 6, 1844.

[3] J. H. Moon to William Henry Ruffner, MS letter, December 12, 1842. Ruffner Papers, Montreat.

the General Assembly (Old School). A third controversy came from a foreign source; this was the agitation over slavery in the Free Church of Scotland. Several minor controversies also disturbed the peace of the Southern Church, including problems in the formation of the Evangelical Alliance and the policies of the American Sunday School Union.

The division of the Presbyterian Church in 1837-1838 was a serious blow to the various non-denominational benevolent enterprises.[1] Nevertheless, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had continued to receive support from the South, and Southern Presbyterian papers took frequent notice of A.B.C.F.M. activities. In 1840, however, the society came under pressure to clarify its position in regard to slavery, which was duly noted by the Charleston Observer.[2] Two years later abolitionists active in the affairs of the A.B.C.F.M. had uncovered the embarrassing fact that one of the Board's missionaries was a slaveholder, J. Leighton Wilson. Wilson had become a slaveholder by inheritance after joining the Board, but had freed most of his slaves and sent them to Liberia. Two slaves, however, had refused to be freed. The Board, at the prompting of the abolitionists, admitted that they did not know whether or not he had freed the last two slaves, but promised to make inquiry.[3]

Wilson's reply to the Board gave a summary of his relationship to slavery, pointing out the action he had taken to emancipate

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[1] For an assessment of the effects of the division on the benevolent enterprises see Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 254-273.

[2] Charleston Observer, October 3, 1840.

[3] Ibid., November 19, 1842; Watchman of the South, December 1, 1842. On Wilson's view of slavery see supra, p. 114.

slaves he had obtained through both inheritance and marriage; altogether he had freed over thirty. Two, however, had refused freedom.

> In relation to the other two, who are in voluntary servitude, I would remark, that I have used every means, short of coercion, to induce them to go where they could safely accept their freedom....I desire no profit in any form from their labors. Those who emigrated to Africa were brought here at private cost, involving an expense of several thousand dollars. The only object I have in alluding to this fact is to show that I am not a slaveholder for the sake of gain, and that, so far as I have funds to dispose of in the cause of humanity, they have been appropriated chiefly to promote the happiness and comfort of those who have been in bondage.[1]

Wilson then offered to resign from the Board if it would be in the best interest of the work of missions. The managers of the Board were sympathetic with his dilemma, but it is clear that abolitionists had capitalized on the issue and seriously embarrassed the Board. The matter was resolved by Wilson issuing a certificate of freedom for his slaves.[2] The fate of one is uncertain, but the other was retained in South Carolina, working for wages on the plantation of a member of Wilson's family.[3]

The reaction in the South--particularly in South Carolina--to the Wilson incident was sharp. In an extremely long letter to Wilson a member of the Presbytery of Harmony (of which Wilson was a member) urged Wilson to withdraw from the A.B.C.F.M. because of their

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[1] J. Leighton Wilson to Rufus Anderson, MS letter, June 23, 1843. Wilson Papers, Montreat. The letter is also printed in Hampton C. DuBose, Memoirs of Rev. John Leighton Wilson, D.D., Missionary to Africa and Secretary of Foreign Missions (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1895), pp. 100-102. The two slaves were in South Carolina.

[2] J. Leighton Wilson to William Wilson, MS letter, July 27, 1843. Wilson Papers, Montreat. The letter enclosed the certificate of freedom, which is also extant. He advised William Wilson (a close relative) to free the slaves, but to do so as quietly as possible so that they could stay in South Carolina if they desired.

[3] DuBose, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

agitation of the slavery question.[1] The letter (contrary to the intentions of the writer) was not adopted by the Presbytery, and some aspects of it were attacked by the Charleston Observer.[2] The Presbytery did, however, communicate with Wilson and offered to support him if he wanted to leave the A.B.C.F.M.[3] By that time the issue had been substantially resolved, and Wilson refused to leave the Board.[4]

The controversy had several effects on the South, particularly in the South Carolina area. For one thing, it marked the virtual end of Southern Presbyterian involvement in the A.B.C.F.M. The Charleston Observer, formerly favorable to the Board, remarked:

> Let the no creed party--and the very liberal creed party--and the Abolition party--and whoever else that pleases--support, if they will, the American Board; but,...we are not compelled to labor through that channel for the conversion of the heathen.[5]

A second effect was the increased isolation of the Southern Church from Christians of other traditions, especially those which conceivably might have had some degree of influence upon Southern Presbyterians otherwise. Third, the controversy gave firm evidence that

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[1]The extended "letter" filled over seventy full columns of the Charleston Observer, and was published in the paper weekly from July 1 through September 2, 1843. The writer's objections to the A.B.C.F.M. extended beyond their anti-slavery position, as he was strongly against non-denominational mission work.

[2]Charleston Observer, September 2, 1843. See also the letter to the editor in the August 19, 1843, issue. Objections were voiced mainly against the writer's stand on denominational missions, not on the issue of slavery and the Board.

[3]Minutes of the Presbytery of Harmony, MS, April, 1844, Vol. 2, pp. 364-366. It will also be found in the Charleston Observer, April 27, 1844.

[4]"J. Leighton Wilson to the Presbytery of Harmony", Charleston Observer, June 28, July 5, July 12, and July 17, 1845. A later letter indicates that some abolitionists still were agitating the Board after this; Wilson said he had no quarrel with the Board but was tired of "New England Ultras". J. Leighton Wilson to William Wilson, MS letter, February 6, 1846. Wilson Papers, Montreat.

[5]Charleston Observer, August 12, 1843.

Southern Presbyterians by this time were in no way open to discussion of the slavery issue. Finally, the incident was a warning to Presbyterians in the South that abolitionism was not silent, and that further agitation from ecclesiastical sources could be expected.

Presbyterians in the South did not have to wait long for further controversy. A more serious threat was becoming apparent in the General Assembly by 1844. Agitation over slavery had appeared in other denominations; as early as 1841 both the Charleston Observer and the Watchman of the South noted the controversy in the Baptist Church over slavery, and the latter paper warned that a geographical split would be inevitable if the issue was not left alone.[1] Several years later both the Baptist and Methodist denominations had split over slavery, and both papers again warned of a similar fate for the Presbyterian Church if the issue was forced by abolitionists.[2]

In the General Assembly memorials on slavery had been presented (usually from the Presbytery of Chillicothe) annually since 1841, but they were invariably laid on the table before discussion could take place.[3] In 1844, however, a more concerted effort was made to raise the issue, and after some controversy the matter was again laid on the table, by a vote of 115 to 70.[4] Southerners were concerned that the 1845 Assembly might be more stormy, and that the Presbyterian Church might still be divided by slavery. The Watchman of the South warned of the possible consequences of the 1845 Assembly:

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[1] Ibid., May 15, 1841; Watchman of the South, April 1, 1841.

[2] Watchman of the South, June 6, 1844, March 13, 1845; Charleston Observer, June 22 and June 29, 1844.

[3] GA Minutes (O.S.), Volume 9, p. 419; Vol 10, pp. 16, 18, 35, 46, 173.

[4] Ibid., Vol. 8, pp. 366-367, 376.

> ...that the South should be gravely invited to consent that the General Assembly should be converted into a debating society, for the purpose of discussing Abolition, is indeed so preposterous that we hardly know how to express our ideas of the absurdity. The South will never consent to such folly. The Southern members will unanimously retire from any such scene. If our brethren in other parts of the Union think otherwise, and in sufficient numbers vote for discussion so as to bring it on, the responsibility will be on them.[1]

In spite of this statement, however, it is difficult to conclude that the Southern Church was more than only mildly anxious about the outcome. Unlike the reaction in the late 1830's, no presbyteries apparently adopted resolutions instructing their commissioners to withdraw from the Assembly, and it seems likely that most Southern Presbyterians expected the issue to be concluded favorably. In this they were not disappointed. Unlike previous Assemblies in recent years, the 1845 General Assembly brought the matter of slavery into review and adopted an important memorial on the subject.[2] The lengthy statement emphatically repudiated the contention of abolitionists

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[1] Watchman of the South, January 23, 1845. See also the Charleston Observer, May 22, 1845.

[2] GA Minutes (O.S.), Vol. 11, pp. 16-18. The comment of James Henley Thornwell, written during the Assembly, is of interest, and indicates the strong Southern influence on the memorial: "The question of slavery has been before the house, and referred to a special committee of seven. Though not a member of the committee, I have been consulted on the subject, and have drawn up a paper, which I think the committee and the Assembly will substantially adopt; and if they do, abolitionism will be killed in the Presbyterian Church, at least for the present. I have no doubts but that the Assembly, by a very large majority, will declare slavery not to be sinful, will assert that it is sanctioned by the word of God, that it is a purely civil relation, with which the Church, as such, has not right to interfere, and that abolitionism is essentially wicked, disorganizing, and ruinous....The Southern members have invited discussion, and they will triumphantly gain the day. It will be a great matter to put the agitation on slavery at rest, and to save the Church from dismemberment and scism; and particularly to do it here, in the stronghold of abolitionism." James Henley Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, May 19, 1845, in Thornwell, Life, p. 286. The meeting of the General Assembly was in Cincinnati, Ohio. A postscript indicated that Thornwell's report was not adopted by the committee, but "takes nearly the same position; one which vindicates the South, and will put the question at rest."

that slavery was in every circumstance a moral wrong. At the same time it called for the amelioration of the condition of the slave, pointing out that the New Testament prescribed both duties of slaves and duties of masters.

> The Apostles of Christ sought to ameliorate the condition of slaves, not by denouncing and excommunicating their masters, but by teaching both masters and slaves the glorious doctrines of the gospel, and enjoining upon each the discharge of their relative duties. Thus only can the church of Christ, as such, now improve the condition of the slaves in our country.[1]

There was no suggestion that gradual or eventual emancipation was a goal toward which Christians should work. In effect, the 1845 action repudiated the anti-slavery position of some earlier Assemblies, especially that of 1818. The memorial was adopted by an overwhelming majority, 168 to 13.

The reaction in the South was predictable. A letter to the Watchman of the South from a commissioner described the Assembly's action:

> Never before in my life, did I ever witness a more intense interest in any body and in the crowded audience that was present when the report was read....The decision was unexpectedly harmonious. I hope this absorbing subject is now settled--I was going to say forever--but at least for the next 50 years. Some of us did all we could to keep it entirely out of the house, but after our efforts proved fruitless, we made up our minds to meet it, to argue the subject to the heart's content of those who have been so clamorous in their complaints against the Assembly....I trust they are now satisfied, and will slough off, and if they choose set up for themselves. I trust that no future Assembly will be troubled with their petitions and memorials ....I feel now, more than I have done for the last ten years, that the Union is safe.[2]

Several Southern judicatories also took note of the statement

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[1] Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 17.

[2] Watchman of the South, July 15, 1847.

of the Assembly. The Presbytery of Hopewell (Georgia) found the action "highly satisfactory".[1] The Presbytery of Orange likewise found the action favorable:

> Whereas the subject of slavery is one of so exciting a nature in itself & so well calculated to elicit views & feelings of the most opposite kind in a body constituted like our Assembly of representatives from various sections of our country, divided especially on this subject--& whereas this subject has for such a length of time agitated our highest judicatory & has just rent many other branches of the Christian Chh in this land, threatening further the disruption of the union; & whereas after a fair opportunity was given for discussion on the floor of the Assembly, This body was enabled to come to an almost unanimous decision--expressing those views which we have ever cherished--& which we hold to be essential to our very existence as a nation.
>
> Therefore Resolved. This Presbytery cannot but regard an action so harmonious & so decided as brought about by the especial interposition of the great Head of the Chh. & we hereby acknowledge it as such with thankfulness.
>
> Resolved further That we feel encouraged in the assurance that the same God who has preserved us thus far in the midst of so many agitations will carry on our beloved Chh--till She shall triumph over all enemies.[2]

Similar action was taken by several other presbyteries and at least one synod; it is of interest to note that most of these were located in the lower Atlantic states, where pro-slavery feeling was especially strong.[3]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Hopewell, MS, October, 1845, Vol. 2, pp. 164-165.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Orange, MS, October, 1845, Vol. 3, pp. 438-439. This resolution is wrongly attributed to the April, 1845, meeting by Stone, op. cit., p. 89.

[3] For other examples see Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, MS, August, 1845, Vol. 11, pp. 234-239; Minutes of the Presbytery of South Carolina, MS, October, 1845, Vol. 2, p. 264; Minutes of the Synod of Georgia, printed, November, 1845, p. 12. In 1849 the matter of slavery again came before the Assembly in a series of memorials. The Assembly reaffirmed their former stand, and explicitly refused to propose any scheme of emancipation. GA Minutes (O.S.), 1849, pp. 254-255. The debate caused almost no notice in the South, indicating the certainty Southern Presbyterians felt about the outcome. The only official notice of the action in the South apparently was that of the

A third ecclesiastical controversy over slavery had as its source the Free Church of Scotland. Many Southern Presbyterians felt a strong kinship with the Scottish Church, and Southern papers had given very full coverage to the controversies which led up to the Disruption in 1843. As soon as the news of the Disruption reached the South there was a widespread feeling of great sympathy and determination to aid the Free Church. The editor of the Watchman of the South urged immediate contributions for the Free Church, while the Charleston Observer termed the Free Church "One of the greatest miracles of the age."[1] Several Synods and Presbyteries adopted resolutions encouraging financial support for the Free Church.[2] Among the most zealous supporters of the Free Church was Dr. Thomas Smyth, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston. Smyth collected money for the cause and published an extended pamphlet urging support for the Free Church.[3]

Synod of West Tennessee, which stated "That we cordially approve of the harmonious action of the Assembly in the much litigated question of slavery.--that its wise & discreet views on the subject have done much to conciliate the reasonable men of all parties...." Minutes of the Synod of West Tennessee, MS,October, 1849, Vol. 1, p. 249.

[1]Watchman of the South, July 27, 1843; Charleston Observer, January 20, 1844.

[2]See, for example, Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, November, 1843, Vol. 2, pp. 199-202; Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, October, 1843, Vol. 7, pp. 154-156; Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, reprinted in Watchman of the South, December 28, 1843; Minutes of the Presbytery of Harmony, MS, April, 1844, Vol. 2, p. 370; Minutes of the Presbytery of Montgomery (Virginia), MS, November, 1843, Vol. 1, p. 8.

[3]Thomas Smyth, The Exodus of the Church of Scotland and the Claims of the Free Church of Scotland to the Sympathy and Assistance of American Christians. (Charleston: B. Jenkins, 1843), reprinted in J. William Flinn, editor, Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth, D.D. (Columbia, South Carolina: R. L. Bryan Co., 1908), Vol. 5, pp. 193-233. (This edition of Smyth's writings will hereafter be referred to as Smyth, Works.) A second edition was published in 1844 in New York and London, and will be found in Smyth, Works, Vol. 3, pp. 479-550. The best summary of Smyth's life and thought is Erskine Clarke, "Thomas Smyth: Moderate of the Old South," unpublished Th.D. thesis, Union Theological Seminary, 1970.

The Free Church, anxious to take advantage of the reservoir of good will in America, sent representatives to America to seek backing for their cause. In the early months of 1844 several representatives visited cities in the South, and one, George Lewis, made an extended tour of the South on behalf of the Free Church.[1] Lewis estimated that the South contributed about nine thousand dollars to the Free Church, although the exact amount is uncertain.[2] However, it was not long before abolitionists in Scotland began to berate the Free Church for its acceptance of money from slaveholders.[3]

News of controversy over Southern gifts to the Free Church reached the South in May, 1844. The Charleston Observer reprinted (from the Scotsman of Edinburgh and the Argus of Glasgow) an account of a meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society called to protest the acceptance of money from the South by the Free Church; over two thousand people, it was claimed, were in attendance.[4] The editor expressed the conviction that the views of the meeting were not representative of those of the Free Church generally, believing the Free Church to be "disposed to reciprocate with us kind and christian

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[1]For Lewis' account of his tour (which includes numerous references to slavery in the South) see George Lewis, Impressions of America and the American Churches: From the Journal of the Rev. G. Lewis. (Edinburgh: W. P. Kennedy, 1845).

[2]George Lewis to Thomas Chalmers, MS letter, June 1, 1844. Thomas Chalmers Papers, New College Library.

[3]For accounts of the controversy in Scotland see George Shepperson, "The Free Church and American Slavery," Scottish Historical Review, Vol. 30, pp. 126-143; C. Duncan Rice, "The Scottish Factor in the Fight against American Slavery, 1830-1870". Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1969, pp. 272-346. For briefer treatments of some aspects of the controversy see George Shepperson, "Thomas Chalmers, the Free Church of Scotland, and the South," Journal of Southern History, Vol. 17, pp. 517-537; Robert Botsford, "Scotland and the American Civil War," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1955, pp. 14-17.

[4]Charleston Observer, May 4, 1844.

feelings."[1] The news, however, caused consternation in the South. Thomas Smyth wrote Thomas Chalmers within a few weeks of the news, enclosing a large contribution for the Free Church but expressing "pain and grief" at the agitation. "Certain it is we would never have been forward to tender our Christian sympathy and assistance had we conceived the possibility of having our gifts reciprocated by anathema and abuse."[2]

Several months after this letter Smyth spent a few weeks in Edinburgh. While there he spent some time with Thomas Chalmers, and went with him once on a visit to a mission church in the Edinburgh slums; Chalmers also invited him to preach in his pulpit, but Smyth demurred in favor of his travelling companion, Dr. W.A. Scott, also a Southerner.[3] While there Smyth asked Chalmers to write a letter expressing his views of American slavery.[4] Chalmers' reply in all likelihood did not meet with Smyth's full approval, as it expressed disapproval of slavery.

> As a friend to the universal virtue and liberty of mankind, I rejoice in the prospect of those days when slavery shall be banished from the face of the earth....Few things would afford me greater satisfaction than to hear of a commencement in your country, of that process by which the labour of freemen might be substituted for that of slaves.[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Thomas Smyth to Thomas Chalmers, MS letter, May 24, 1844. Thomas Chalmers Papers, New College Library. The letter is also reprinted in George Shepperson, "Thomas Chalmers....", pp. 523-524.

[3] Thomas Smyth, Autobiographical Notes, Letters and Reflections (Charleston, S.C.; Walker, Evans & Cogswell Company, 1914, edited by Louisa Cheves Stoney), p. 218. This work will be cited hereafter as Smyth, Notes.

[4] Thomas Smyth to Thomas Chalmers, MS letter, August 29, 1844. Thomas Chalmers Papers, New College Library. Also in Shepperson, "Thomas Chalmers....," pp. 524-525.

[5] Thomas Chalmers to Thomas Smyth, September 25, 1844, in Smyth, Notes,

The letter, however, spoke against those who would excommunicate slaveholders from the Church. The letter was widely circulated in Scotland and immediately drew protests from Scottish abolitionists. We have not, however, been able to find any notation of it in the Charleston Observer, and it seems likely that Smyth did not circulate it after returning to South Carolina; it would have been interpreted as an anti-slavery statement by most Presbyterians there.[1]

Meanwhile the issue of slavery had come before the General Assembly of the Free Church in 1844, and a committee was appointed to prepare a statement.[2] The statement appeared several months later, and said that "slavery in all its forms is to be regarded as a system of oppression which cannot be defended".[3] A copy was sent to the Old School General Assembly. The action caused further reaction in South Carolina. The Charleston Observer condemned it, and noted acidly that the Free Church had not rejected Southern Presbyterian money although it had rejected Southern Presbyterians.[4] The Presby-

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pp. 351-352; William Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D., (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable & Co., 1852), Vol. 4, pp. 581-582. Botsford's statement that "This letter contributed greatly to the strong response of the Southern Presbyterians to the Free Church delegation," (op. cit., p. 15) is incorrect. The delegation had already returned to Scotland by that time.

[1]A later statement of Chalmers, expanding his statements to Smyth, will be found in Hanna, op. cit., Vol. 4, pp. 582-591. We have likewise found no mention of it in the Southern Presbyterian press. It was reprinted in the National Anti-Slavery Standard (June 26, 1845) in the paper's "pro-slavery" section.

[2]For a full history of the Free Church Assembly's actions through their 1846 Assembly meeting see Report of the Proceedings of the General Assembly on Saturday, May 30, and Monday, June 1, 1846, Regarding the Relations of the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Churches of America. (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1846).

[3]Quoted in Ibid., p. 4.

[4]Charleston Observer, September 28, 1844.

tery of Glasgow of the Free Church also sent a letter to the Governor of South Carolina concerning slavery. The Governor wrote a long reply to the Free Church which rejected foreign interference:

> The interference of foreigners, or any persons beyond our own boundaries, in the execution of the municipal laws of a Sovereign State, even if in respectful terms, is certainly a violation of all propriety and courtesy; and if carried to any extent, must become wholly intolerable....Does it never occur to you that in anathematizing slavery, you... repudiate Christ and Moses, or charge God with downright crime, in regulating and perpetrating slavery....[1]

The communication from the Free Church Assembly came before the Old School Assembly in 1845, the same meeting at which the Assembly adopted its full statement on slavery. The Old School Assembly replied by sending a copy of the action on slavery just taken by the Assembly, and rejected the idea that slavery was a matter for legislation by the Church.[2] A further letter was received by the Old School Assembly in 1847, of which James H. Thornwell of South Carolina was Moderator. The reply of the Assembly to the Free Church was brief, and indicated that no change in the Assembly's position could be expected. "As we do not deem further communications on our part, on this subject necessary, we refer you to our previous letter...."[3]

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[1] Ibid., December 14, 1844. See also the comments of the editor in the same issue.

[2] GA Minutes (O.S.), 1845, Vol. 11, pp. 43-45. The text of the Free Church letter and the General Assembly reply can also be found in Charleston Observer, June 14, 1845, and Watchman of the South, June 12, 1845.

[3] GA Minutes (O.S.), 1847, Vol. 11, p. 386. The full text of the letter is not, however, given. For the full text see the Watchman and Observer, July 8, 1847. The comment by J. H. Thornwell in a letter to his wife is of interest: "We came very near having a breeze on the question of reading or not reading the letters from the General Assembly of the Church in Ireland, and the General Assembly of the Free Church in Scotland; but the letters were finally read, and the whole affair passed off very pleasantly. They were very strongly against slavery, but produced no ferment." James H. Thornwell to

It was clear from the controversy involving the Free Church

Nancy Thornwell, May 27, 1847, in Thornwell, Life, p. 298.

As mentioned in Thornwell's letter, the Assembly had also received a communication from the Presbyterian Church of Ireland on slavery. Less note of the Irish position was taken in the South, although the General Assembly (Old School) of 1845 had received a letter from the Irish General Assembly on slavery. The Assembly's reply will be found in G.A. Minutes (O.S.), 1845, Vol. 11, pp. 45-46. In 1846 Thomas Smyth, who was a native of Belfast, visited Ireland (as well as Edinburgh), and found that he was under attack from anti-slavery forces. He was accused of libelling Frederick Douglass, the American ex-slave and abolitionist, who was also in Belfast at the time, and barely avoided a lawsuit over the matter. See Smyth, Notes, pp. 362-378. Smyth also avoided attending the Irish General Assembly, but denied an abolitionist claim that he had been refused admission. In 1846 the Old School Assembly again received a communication from the Irish General Assembly. Again a reply was sent; it denied the right of the Church to interfere with slavery, and affirmed its conviction that slaveholding was no bar to communion since it was not a sin. The text will be found in G.A. Minutes (O.S.), 1846, Vol. 11, pp. 223-224. The 1847 Assembly again received a communication from Ireland, and again replied; the text, however, is not included in the Minutes. A letter to the Watchman and Observer declared that Ireland had no right to interfere with Southern slavery: "I am extremely sorry to see this topic so improperly introduced. The very introduction of it supposes us either to be ignorant of its evils, or unwilling to do our duty. Nothing can exceed the sophistry of the Irish reply....There is no place to be found in the Southern States so low in the scale of intelligence and morality as the South of Ireland, pure and untainted as it is by the breath of slavery. Notwithstanding the rigid government of England, with its castles, its cannon looking down from port holes and mossy walls, its armies bristling with muskets and bayonets, and its thousands of police-men, stationed and dispersed through every part of the kingdom, the papers are filled with rumors of riots and murders....It is a fact to which we may well call the world to bear witness, that the slaves in the South are infinitely better off than the great masses of the people in the South of Ireland, and a large portion of the population in the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales." Watchman and Observer, November 18, 1847. The letter was from a tourist who was visiting Ireland. See also a similar letter of a tourist in the Watchman and Observer, February 17, 1848.

A final instance of a foreign ecclesiastical attempt to censure the South for its position on slavery likewise received only slight notice. Again, a central part was played by Thomas Smyth. In 1846 Smyth attended the organizational meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, in London. An attempt was made to exclude slaveholders from the Alliance, but Smyth spoke strongly against such a position, saying it would involve the Alliance in a domestic political question. For Smyth's speech see Report of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Freemason's Hall, London, from August 19th to September 2nd Inclusive, 1846. (London: Partridge and Oakley, 1847), pp. 304-309. On the effect of abolitionist agitation on the Alliance see Duncan

that any efforts on the part of other Church bodies to alter the Southern Presbyterian position on slavery were, at this late date, doomed to failure. The great sympathy which Southern Presbyterians felt for the Free Church meant that that body had the best opportunity of any ecclesiastical group (outside of Presbyterians in the North) of forcing reconsideration of the slavery issue. However, the incident is important mainly because it demonstrates the complete intransigence on slavery by the 1840's.

We have so far been examining the negative reaction to abolitionist pressures in the 1840's which took the form of anti-abolitionism. The positive response to these pressures was the development of a strong pro-slavery argument, which attempted to give intellectual and Biblical foundations to the institution of slavery.

The main outlines of the Biblical pro-slavery argument were already firmly established by the 1840's, and by that date the idea that slavery was sanctioned by Scripture was firmly entrenched in the Southern Presbyterian mind. Nevertheless, the defense of slavery assumed great importance during the 1840's; this would continue until the Civil War.

Rice, op. cit., pp. 346-359. Smyth gives only a brief account of his part in the conference. Smyth, Notes, pp. 359-360. Some idea of the South's isolation can be gained from the fact that Smyth was the only Southern Presbyterian delegate, although there were many representatives from the North. The Watchman and Observer took brief notice of the Alliance and the problem of slaveholding, and expressed satisfaction at the final outcome, although reserving judgment on the overall value of the Alliance. Watchman and Observer, June 11 and October 22, 1846.

Southern Presbyterian writings on slavery usually took one of two forms. On one hand, numerous works were concerned mainly with how the Church should function in a slave society in carrying out its mission. Behind such works were several assumptions. It was assumed, for example, that the basic character of society should be accepted by the Church whatever that character might be, good or bad. In other words, the changing of the basic structure of a society was not part of the function of the Church, although it was also assumed that the Church would have a positive effect on society. It was also almost an inevitable assumption by this time that, in fact, the basic structure of Southern society was good; in other words, slavery was God's will.

This led to the second form which Southern Presbyterian writings took, namely, the affirmation that slavery itself was ordained by God, and was (or at least could be, if properly regulated by God's laws concerning it) a positive good. Thus, instead of mere acquiesence, the Church was seen as the active defender of the social structure of the American south.[1]

The first form of Southern Presbyterian writings--that

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[1]It would seem that such a position would run counter to the affirmation that slavery was a political question only, with which the Church should have nothing to do. The justification for adopting this strong pro-slavery position was that Scripture at this point was explicit. It is of interest to note that statements disclaiming the right of ecclesiastical interference in slavery were most pronounced at those times when the Southern Church was most under attack within the General Assembly, especially in the late 1830's, and around 1845. Conversely, the adamant pro-slavery position was especially prominent in those periods which were most free of agitation from ecclesiastical sources, which included much of the 1840's and 1850's.

emphasizing the Church's duty in a slave society--can be treated briefly, as the main elements are treated in the "Appendix" to the present work.[1] Essentially, duties were of two types, which overlapped to some degree. The first was the duty of the Church to provide religious instruction to the slave. The second aspect involved the duty which individual masters and servants had toward each other. The master's duty included the religious instruction of his slaves, but extended beyond this to all aspects of the master's relation with his slaves. This included especially the proper physical treatment of slaves. Dr. William T. Hamilton, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Alabama, spoke of these various aspects:

> The slave has a right to be so treated that he may learn to live honestly, virtuously, and respectably here, and may enjoy every possible advantage for securing eternal life in heaven hereafter.[2]

The second form of writing, the defense of slavery as a

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[1]See "Appendix," p.

[2]Watchman of the South, May 8, 1845. Of interest also is a statement of a pastor in Virginia in a sermon on the duties of masters: "We will not pretend to urge the obligation of masters to supply the temporal wants of their people. for the twofold reason--that policy and self interest, as well as the word of God requires that these should be supplied, and then we do not know that there are any among us who are delinquent in relation to this matter. We will confine our remarks then to obligation that rests on Masters for the religious instruction of their servants." Neill McKay, typescript copy of sermon, Neill McKay Papers, Montreat. The sermon is not dated, but was preached sometime during the early years of McKay's pastorate at the Buffalo Church (Virginia); he became pastor in 1841. For other representative articles dealing with the duties of the Church and Christian masters see Watchman and Observer, March 12 and March 19, 1846. The obligation of masters to slaves was presented in other ways, also. Obituaries often mentioned the faithfulness of the person in pursuing his duties toward his slaves; see, for example, Watchman and Observer, January 14, 1847.

positive good sanctioned by God, found expressed in various ways. A sermon by Rev. S. J. Cassells (pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Norfolk, Virginia), spoke of the origin of slavery, but said that in spite of its origins in greed slavery was intended for good by God:

> I say nothing here of the injustice of those African systems which engender slavery. I pass by the cupidity and love of gain which may have influenced the original purchasers of African slaves. In all these policies there may have been much of wrong, much of evil. Nor do I here allude to any cruelties which wicked masters may at times inflict upon their servants. I pass these by, and affirm it as my deliberate opinion, that God intends the enslaving of the Africans among us for great good. His wise and powerful hand has been directing and controlling in this matter a great moral machinery....Still, however, will the final and good result be accomplished; and masters and servants, those who hold slaves and those who condemn slaveholders--all will be constrained to admire those results of civilization, of liberty, and of christianity, which shall thus be wrought out for Africa, by an exiled and enslaved portion of her long humbled population.[1]

Fuller expression of the pro-slavery position was given in the Southern Presbyterian Review.[2] Going beyond the usual survey of instances of slavery in the Old and New Testament, the Review sought to base slavery on the nature of human society as ordained by God. Man, it argued, was created a dependent being, i.e., one who had need of other people.

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[1] Ibid., September 28, 1843. The editor's introduction states that the sermon was published as a separate pamphlet under the title "Servitude, and the Duty of Masters to their Servants." Cassells also gave attention to the duty of masters to be humane and to give their slaves sufficient food, shelter, and medical care.

[2] The Southern Presbyterian Review was first published in 1847, largely under the leadership of the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary. It was essentially a theological journal, published quarterly, and maintained a very high standard of quality. In many ways it compared favorably with The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review (published by the faculty of Princeton Seminary), and was modelled after it. It had an important role in unifying opinion in the South, especially among Presbyterian clergymen.

> It is pure fiction to assert that the state of nature ever was a state of individual independence. Mankind from the beginning never have existed otherwise than in society and under government....The Creator originally destined man for society and civilization. These, and not barbarism and personal independence, are his natural state. And consequently, all those rights and all those various subordinations of personal condition, which are necessary to the perfection of society and to the full development of humanity, are strictly and perfectly natural.[1]

If this were granted, then it could be seen that slavery was a natural part of human society. "The subjection, by God, of one man and one nation to another man and another nation, is supposed throughout the Bible as an ordinary and constantly recurring fact."[2] But did such subjection necessarily imply slavery? Did not all men have the same rights of freedom? This, said the Review, was a wrong conclusion. There are two kinds of rights which God has given to individuals. One category is the rights that are enjoyed by all men, and without which a man would not be a man. There is, however, a second category; these are the rights "which appertain not to man as such, but to man in particular providential circumstances and relations."[3] It was a mistake to say, therefore, that freedom was a universal right of man. It was, instead, a right of the second category, and depended on the circumstances in which one was providentially placed:

> But the rights which belong to particular conditions... must obviously admit of as great a variety as those circumstances and relations themselves; and these rights are distributed under the providence of God, according to those laws (as natural as society itself,) in conformity

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[1]"The Christian Doctrine of Human Rights and Slavery." Southern Presbyterian Review, March, 1849, pp. 569-570. The article was unsigned.

[2]Ibid., p. 571.

[3]Ibid., p. 572.

> with which men come to be found in these circumstances and relations. Some are rulers, some subjects; some are rich, some poor; some are fathers, some children; some are bond, some free. And if a man is justly and providentially a ruler, he has the rights of a ruler...if a slave, only the rights of a slave....All men have an equal and perfect right to the status in which they are born, with all its established rights and privileges, and also to whatever else they can legally and meritoriously acquire."[1]

This did not mean, the Review contended, that the Christian was committed to total social immobility. In the providence of God the circumstances of some men do change, and it might be that slavery would eventually become extinct.[2] However that might be, it was clear that abolitionism was not Christian. "...the essence of slavery, the master's right to his slave's labor, is no more assaulted by Christianity than are the property rights of rich men at the North."[3]

The importance of the development of pro-slavery defenses should not be underestimated. Their significance on the attitude of the South generally is difficult to weigh; Presbyterians were by no means the only denomination involved in a justification of slavery at this time. Taken as a whole, however, the religious arguments undoubtedly played a major role in shaping Southern attitudes. Arguments from politicians and wealthy slaveholders might be suspected of ulterior motives in their defenses of slavery. Arguments from clergymen (especially highly educated ones), on the other hand, were undoubtedly more readily accepted. The significance of such arguments

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[1] Ibid., p. 573.

[2] "Are we then asked whether we believe Slavery among us will be perpetual? We say, as far as Christianity is concerned we do not see why it might not be perpetual, and yet we do not see reason to say that it will be so....It is in God's hands, and there we wish it to be." Ibid., p. 584. See also Ibid., p. 577.

[3] Ibid., p. 584. For other articles on slavery in various Southern Presbyterian periodicals see Charleston Observer, September 3 and November 12, 1842; Watchman and Observer, April 19 and August 30, 1849; Southern Presbyterian, March 14, 1849.

on the Presbyterian Church is somewhat easier to assess. The one major effect was to render Southern Presbyterians immune to attacks on slavery. Convinced that there was a Biblical basis for slavery, they refused to examine any argument which arrived at any other conclusion, regardless of its source. It was perhaps understandable that Southern Presbyterians did not take seriously the work of the more eccentric abolitionists. It is less comprehensible how they could dismiss with the same scorn the efforts of abolitionists working within the Churches, both in the North and in Great Britain. This rejection is only understandable when seen against the backdrop of a strong pro-slavery based on Scripture, the acceptance of which precluded any re-examination of the institution of slavery.

PRESBYTERIANS AND DISSENT ON SLAVERY

The position of Presbyterians in the South on slavery in the 1840's was not in every way identical with that held by other Southerners. It is important, therefore, to note some areas of disagreement. This "dissent" was seen in two ways. First, Presbyterians dissented from some aspects of the slave system which they felt to be unchristian. Second, there were a few instances of active dissent against slavery itself.

Dissent against the slavery system revolved essentially around three issues. The first was the treatment of slaves. During the 1830's there was deep reluctance to admit that abolitionist accusations of mistreatment might have some substance. The 1840's saw a greater willingness to acknowledge such problems, although not to the extent that would be true in the 1850's and during the Civil War. The Southern Presbyterian Review spoke of the effect

Christianity should have on a master:

> It softens his spirit, in the sternness of law and discipline, while it confirms and establishes their just bonds. Whatever was formerly harsh in the relation is gradually removed. Mutual intercourse is sweetened by it--the master is no tyrant, the slave no rebel....It is, then, as plain as daylight, that Christianity condemns all laws of the State, and all ideas and practices of individuals which put aside the immortality of the slave and regard him in any other light than that of a moral and responsible fellow-creature of our own.[1]

S. J. Cassells spoke in more specific terms of the proper treatment of slaves:

> It is the duty of masters, I remark first, to avoid all cruelty and unkindness in the treatment of their servants. The abuse of power in every relation of life is tyranny. A cruel parent, a cruel husband, a cruel magistrate, and a cruel master, are all to be considered as greatly guilty before God....Every thing unkind, severe, and harsh in the treatment of our servants, should be carefully avoided ....Masters should also attend to the temporal comforts and wants of their servants....Every proper idea of slavery implies that the temporal and bodily necessities of the slave be provided for. To exclude this, is inhuman and cruel.[2]

A second item of dissent involved the African slave trade, although again not to the degree that would be evident in the 1850's, when there were movements to reopen the African slave trade. The Watchman of the South carried the news of the capture of a slaving center on the African coast, and expressed its approval of such action.[3] The Southern Presbyterian Review also indicated disapproval of the slave trade, because it involved the enslaving of men who were free:

> We do not say that Christianity sanctions Slavery as

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[1] Ibid., pp. 580-581.

[2] Watchman of the South, September 28, 1843.

[3] Ibid., August 26, 1841. See also the statements against the African slave trade in the January 16, 1840, issue.

> Aristotle sanctioned it, when he said that the Greeks might rightfully go and by war reduce the Barbarians into bondage....Our statement that the Bible sanctions Slavery arouses much needless indignation, because the North will not distinguish between the right to govern our Slaves, as being providentially placed under our control, and the right of going and enslaving men free-born.[1]

A third area of dissent was on a more theoretical level. Some Southern apologists for slavery developed the doctrine of the biological inequality of the races to justify the holding of one race in bondage by another. As early as 1787 a book had been written by a Southern Presbyterian which had defended the unity of the human race.[2] In the 1840's the argument broke out with fresh force, with some contending on scientific grounds that the black race was inherently inferior and therefore must be enslaved. Presbyterian opposition was based on several conflicts they saw between such views and their own doctrines. For one thing, a doctrine of the discontinuity of the race was a direct contradiction of the Biblical account of creation. This was usually admitted by those propounding such views, who said that scientific objectivity must come before any preconceived religious notions. Another pro-

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[1] Southern Presbyterian Review, March, 1849, p. 579. "The Christian Doctrine of Human Rights and Slavery."

[2] The book was An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species. It was by Samuel Stanhope Smith, who had been president of Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia. Smith at the time of writing was on the faculty of Princeton, where he would later be president. An expanded second edition was published in 1810, and was republished in Edinburgh. Stanton terms it "the first ambitious American treatise on ethnology and long a standard work in the United States." William Stanton, The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-1859, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). (Stanton's entire work provides an excellent survey of the debate over the unity of the race and the supposed biological inferiority of the blacks.) Smith contended that differences between the races had come about largely because of cultural and climatic factors.

blem was that such views inevitably made the black less than fully human. This could lead to a denial of his spiritual nature, and would mean that missionary efforts among blacks (including foreign missions to Africa) were useless.

The major Presbyterian effort to combat this position was the work of Dr. Thomas Smyth of Charleston. Smyth was a prolific writer and omnivorous reader; his personal library included over ten thousand volumes. Smyth considered the effort to deny the unity of the race as a serious threat to Christianity, and immersed himself in an intense inquiry into the subject.[1] The result was his work entitled The Unity of the Human Races, an extended and learned effort to answer the opponents of the solidarity of the human race.[2] Smyth started with the assumption that both Scripture and science were valid as sources for such an investigation. After looking at the Biblical evidence on the matter, Smyth turned to an extended examination of the scientific evidence for the unity of the race; it occupied about two-thirds of his study. It included such evidences as linguistic characteristics, history, and physiology, and was concerned with all races. He also sought to answer the scientific arguments set forth by the proponents of disunity, especially Professor Louis Agassiz. The work received

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[1] He was undoubtedly interested in the subject partly because of the existence of an impressive scientific community in Charleston, some of whom were also interested in the subject. See Stanton, op. cit., pp. 123-125. Stanton, however, unaccountably fails to mention Smyth's work, although it received very wide circulation.

[2] Thomas Smyth, The Unity of the Human Races Proved to be the Doctrine of Scripture, Reason, and Science: with a Review of the Present Position and Theory of Professor Agassiz. Originally published 1849; reprinted and revised edition 1851. Republished in Smyth, Works, Vol. 8, pp. 1-392.

wide recognition, and was republished over a six month period by both the Southern Presbyterian and the Watchman and Observer.[1] The work was also republished in Edinburgh in 1851, with some of Smyth's pro-slavery statements discreetly omitted.

One important practical aspect of the scientific debate over the unity of the race should be observed. Smyth was not willing to grant that the black race was equal to the white race. He did, however, argue that most differences which did exist could be accounted for by environment. If the environment were changed and opportunity were given for advancement, the black race could also achieve a high standard of civilization. There was therefore no basis for affirming the inherent superiority of one race over another. Smyth quoted with approval some words of Humboldt:

> By maintaining the unity of the human species, we at the same time repel the cheerless assumption of superior and inferior races of men. There are families of nations more readily susceptible of culture, more highly civilized, more ennobled by mental cultivation than others; but not in themselves more noble.[2]

Smyth saw the grim results of any theory which tended to place one race over another. The inevitable outcome would be conflict and even the extinction of whole races:

> Nay, upon our views of this question the entire interests of humanity are pending. Upon it are suspended

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[1]The series began in the Southern Presbyterian on December 28, 1849, and ran through June 21, 1850; publication in the Watchman and Observer began on December 27, 1849, and extended at least through May, 1850 (file incomplete). The second edition (published in Edinburgh, 1851, and republished in Smyth, Works, Vol. 8) included numerous testimonials from noted scientists and clergymen about the first edition; some of these are also preserved in MS in the Smyth Papers, Montreat. Included were testimonials from William Cunningham and Robert Candlish of the Free Church of Scotland.

[2]Smyth, Works, Vol. 8, p. 96.

> the progress of civilization, the diffusion of knowledge, the zeal of christian and general philanthropy, the elevation or degradation of entire races of men, in short, the elevation or extinction of all who are not of the particular race, be it black or white, savage or civilized, which succeeds in gaining the ascendency. And this it is by no means certain must be the white race.[1]

The practical result of the unity of the races, for Smyth, was that all men must be treated as men, and not as inferiors. In the slave society of the South this would include humane treatment of slaves.[2]

The other type of dissent among Southern Presbyterians was not against certain aspects of the slave system, but against slavery itself. As we have seen, the overwhelming weight of Southern Presbyterian opinion by the 1840's was solidly behind the institution of slavery. There were, however, a few exceptions.

One exception was an unnamed individual from Georgia who wrote a letter to the Watchman and Observer which was (somewhat surprisingly) published, having been previously rejected by a Northern paper.[3] The sentiments of the author were not in the least abolitionist in character; he devoted the first part of his letter giving a brief summary of the Scriptural justification for slavery, and contended that the working class in the North and in

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[1] Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 74. See also his remarks on the "barbarous conclusions" of Dr. Nott, one of the best known exponents of racial disunity, pp.75-79.

[2] Although published several years later (in 1852), the work of another Southern Presbyterian clergyman deserves notice at this point. Dr. William T. Hamilton of Mobile published The Friend of Moses; or, A Defence of the Pentateuch as the Production of Moses and an Inspired Document, against the Objections of Modern Skepticism. In it Hamilton also defended the unity of the races. Stanton has stated that "Hamilton came as near as any of the defenders of the unity of man to asserting the equality of the Negro." op. cit., p. 232.

[3] The letter was signed "Veritas." Watchman and Observer, March 15, 1849.

Great Britain was not as well off as the slaves of the South. Nevertheless, he argued that slavery might become unprofitable in the not-to-distant future, and that some plan of gradual emancipation should be put into effect which would speed the process of emancipation. His suggestion was a program of governmental compensation:

> There is one plan by which this slow process of emancipation can be accelerated, and it is this: To furnish Government stock at six per cent interest, redeemable in fifty years, or at the pleasure of the Government, and with it pay the slaveholders the full value of their property. This may appear a startling proposition to some, and especially to the ultra abolitionists, but as long as the slaves have any value, they will not be redeemed without compensation....Then, under this plan let the negroes who are of age go into an apprenticeship of so many years, after which they may go free;--all that are under age to be apprenticed till they are twenty-one years of age--then to go free....Then the people of the free States, whose sympathies appear to be so much enlisted in favor of the slaves, ought, in justice, to agree to receive as colonists their quota of manumitted slaves, apportioned to population and surface of land.... There is a choice of evils--let us be wise--preserve the integrity of the Union, and get out of the difficulty by the best possible means.[1]

The editor made no comment on the proposal, nor was there further discussion of the proposal in the paper.

More important was another proposal presented by one of the leading Presbyterian clergymen in the western part of Virginia, Dr. Henry Ruffner. Ruffner, president of Washington College (later Washington and Lee University), gave an address before a literary society in Lexington, Virginia; at the urging of a number of leading citizens the address was published and widely circulated.[2]

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[1] Ibid., He also backed African colonization as a means of achieving the eventual end of slavery.

[2] Henry Ruffner, Address to the People of West Virginia: Shewing that Slavery is Injurious to the Public Welfare, and that it may

Ruffner rejected the "maglignant rage" of the abolitionists, but said that one of the most adverse effects of their agitation had been the reaction in the South against any scheme of emancipation. The friends of gradual emancipation in the South had "had to postpone all efforts to effect their object, until this tempest of fanaticism should spend its violence, or become less alarming."[1] That time, Ruffner believed, had now come. In his view slavery had had a debilitating effect on the South, and the South was characterized by "generally, instead of the stir and bustle of industry, a dull and dreamy stillness, broken, if broken at all, only by the wordy brawl of politics."[2] Ruffner buttressed his argument by comparing the statistics of the free and slave states since 1790, showing that in terms of population and wealth the South had consistently lost ground.

> What has done this work of desolation? Not war, nor pestilence; not oppression of rulers, civil or ecclesiastical;--but slavery, a curse more destructive in its effects than any of them. It were hard to find, in old king-ridden, priest-ridden, overtaxed, Europe, so large a country, where within twenty years past, such a growing poverty and desolation have appeared.[3]

Ruffner further pointed out precisely how slavery had had a detrimental effect on the South. For one thing, slavery choked the development of manufactures, in spite of the great natural resources of the South; the same was true of commerce and navigation.

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be Gradually Abolished, without Detriment to the Rights and Interests of Slaveholders. (Lexington, Virginia: R. V. Noel, 1847).

[1] Ibid., p. 8.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

[3] Ibid., p. 14.

The reason was simple: black slaves were only adapted to agricultural work, but there was no large group of white artisans in the South, and Northerners had no desire to come south to work. Furthermore, slavery had also retarded the growth of common schools and popular education, in comparison with the Northern states. The negative effects of slavery were true, he said, whether the number of slaves was great or small; western Virginia was a prime example of this fact. This was true partly because small slaveholders always aspired to be large slaveholders, and were thus just as indolent as larger slaveholders. It was also true because inevitably the slave population would grow faster than the free population, until the latter was virtually submerged.

Ruffner proposed that the only solution to the problems burdening the South because of slavery was a plan of gradual emancipation. His plan involved several phases; and was specifically designed for western Virginia. First, he proposed that further importation of slaves into western Virginia be prohibited; on the other hand, there should be no restriction on slave exportation, except that families should not be broken up. A further part of Ruffner's plan called for the emancipation of all slaves born after a certain date, as soon as they reached the age of twenty-five. Some slaveholders, Ruffner admitted, might leave the State to avoid the emancipation law:

> If they choose to stay and submit to the operation of the emancipation law, they have the certainty of gaining much by the rise in the value of their lands, than they will lose in the market value of their slaves, in consequence of the emancipation law. Undoubtedly, such a law would attract emigrants by the thousands from the North....[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 39.

He further proposed that masters be required to educate their slaves for emancipation, and that emancipated slaves be colonized.

It would seem that Ruffner's proposals met with a mixed reception. On one hand, many of his hearers when the address was first given seemed to be impressed, at least enough to subscribe to its publication. It also gained Ruffner some fame as an anti-slavery spokesman; two years later he apparently toured Kentucky speaking against the continuance of slavery, and he was also approached by a Quaker proposing to start a newspaper for gradual emancipation.[1] On the other hand it is clear that the speech and pamphlet met with a sharp negative reaction in some quarters. Benjamin Rice, a brother of John Holt Rice, spoke of the prejudice against colonization to William Henry Ruffner, son of Henry Ruffner, who had become an agent for the American Colonization Society:

> As to doing any thing for the cause in these parts, I am full of doubt--The prejudices of this people are very strong--and I fear, are strongly against this enterprise--Publickly I am sure nothing can be done now--but in private you might do something to remove prejudice and prepare the Way for future operations--It may not be amiss to say that Dr. Ruffner's pamphlet has done some damage to the cause in this region--I mention this that you may be the better able to shape your course in these parts, if you should come.[2]

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[1] For Ruffner in Kentucky see Henry Ruffner to Professor George Dabney, MS letter, May 29, 1849, and James Speed to Henry Ruffner, MS letter, September 7, 1849. For the proposal concerning a newspaper see S. M. Jamey to Henry Ruffner, MS letter, May 28, 1849. All in Ruffner Papers, Montreat.

Ruffner himself was a slaveholder, and on one occasion purchased a female slave from a neighbor rather than have her sold to slave traders. (William Henry Ruffner Diary, MS, entry for January 1, 1849, Ruffner Papers, Montreat.) He did not contend in the pamphlet that slaveholding was sinful or morally wrong; his argument was based solely on pragmatic considerations. His personal convictions about the morality of slavery are uncertain. His son, William Henry Ruffner, became superintendent of education for the State of Virginia after the Civil War, and contended vigorously for the right of blacks to be educated at public expense.

[2] Benjamin Holt Rice to William Henry Ruffner, MS letter, March 9,

About ten years later the younger Ruffner wrote a number of letters to people who had heard the original speech and read the pamphlet. The nature of his inquiry is uncertain, but it is clear that opinion was mixed.[1] One man claimed that his memories of the speech were "indistinct" and that he had never read the pamphlet.[2] Another stated that the speech, in his memory, had been rabidly abolitionist.[3] Still another reply stated that the speech was much different from the published pamphlet, the latter taking a stronger anti-slavery position than the speech.[4] William Henry Ruffner indicated that even ten years after the publication of the pamphlet there were some who still felt bitter about his father's stand.[5]

The two efforts of the unnamed Georgian and Henry Ruffner apparently made little impact. In the total picture of Southern

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1848. Ruffner Papers, Montreat. Rice at the time was a resident of Prince Edward County, in central Virginia east of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

[1]There is indication that some of the original subscribers to the publication of the pamphlet had refused to pay their share of the printing, contending that the published pamphlet was different from the original address. Whether or not the younger Ruffner was attempting to collect the money after ten years would seem unlikely, but the exact nature of his inquiry is uncertain beyond the fact that he asked for recollections about the speech and pamphlet.

[2]J. Echols to William Henry Ruffner, MS letter, July 9, 1858, Ruffner Papers, Montreat.

[3]J. Brockenburg (?) to William Henry Ruffner, MS letter, July 21, 1858. Ruffner Papers, Montreat.

[4]Professor George E. Dabney to William Henry Ruffner, MS letter, July 7, 1858. Ruffner Papers, Montreat.

[5]William Henry Ruffner, undated autobiographical notebook, Ruffner Papers, Montreat. Ruffner retired from the presidency of Washington College in 1849; E. T. Thompson credits the negative reaction to his pamphlet as a major reason for his retirement. E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p 533.

Presbyterians in the 1840's they are noteworthy mainly as curiosities rather than as indications of any marked degree of anti-slavery sentiment.

One final item should be noticed in examining Southern Presbyterians and slavery during the 1840's. The decade saw an upsurge of Presbyterian interest in the colonization cause, in spite of much apathy toward it generally in the South. At first the interest was centered in Virginia and Tennessee. The Charleston Observer, commenting on the visit of Elliot Cresson (agent of the American Colonization Society) to Charleston, was equivocal in its support of his work, saying that it should receive support only if it was clear that it had no connection with abolitionism.[1] The Watchman of the South, on the other hand, strongly commended Cresson and urged support for the A.C.S.[2] The Watchman of the South gave consistent support to the A.C.S., and likewise gave full attention to the Virginia Colonization Society and the newly-formed Virginia Female Colonization Society.[3] The editor also expressed hope that the North would increase its support of the colonization movement.[4] A church in Lexington, Virginia, experienced a revival; one result was inclusion of the A.C.S. as a special project.[5] Slightly over a year later Ralph Gurley of

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[1] Charleston Observer, June 20, 1840.

[2] Watchman of the South, July 2, 1840.

[3] For examples see Watchman of the South, March 12, August 6, 1840; January 7, August 12, 1841; March 10, July 7, 1842; May 11, May 25, 1843. In addition frequent notice was given to financial reports, reports from Liberia, etc.

[4] Ibid., June 2, 1842.

[5] Ibid., May 18, 1843.

the A.C.S. visited a meeting of the Presbytery of Lexington, and a series of resolutions were adopted approving the colonization cause.[1] The attitude of the Charleston Observer began to change after a correspondent visiting Norfolk, Virginia, gave a favorable view of the sailing of a colonization ship to Liberia.[2] After moving to Richmond as editor of the Watchman and Observer, Benjamin Gildersleeve took frequent notice of colonization.[3]

Southern Presbyterian interest in colonization was spurred by a tour in 1845-46 through the South by J. B. Pinney, a Southern Presbyterian who had recently become an agent of the A.C.S. In late October he visited the meeting of the Synod of Virginia and secured their recommendation for his agency.[4] From Virginia he went to North Carolina, where he found Presbyterians willing to support his agency.[5] A few weeks later he paid a similar visit to the Synod of Georgia; their resolution of commendation included the fact that Pinney had been a faithful opponent of abolitionism.[6]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, MS, August, 1844, Vol. 11, pp. 190-191. A similar resolution was passed the previous year by the Presbytery of West Hanover. Minutes of the Presbytery of West Hanover, MS, October, 1843, Vol. 2, p. 232.

[2] Charleston Observer, August 13, 1842.

[3] See especially his comments in the November 6, 1845, issue, and the letter and article in the issue of September 30, 1847. He likewise gave attention to various colonization society activities.

[4] Watchman and Observer, November 6, 1845.

[5] "Bro Lacy received me kindly /in Fayetteville/ & from him & his people I received much hospitality. By getting Mr. Gale to issue a notice I obtained an audience on Thursday & Friday evenings in the Pres Ch and on Friday received contributions from members of the Pres & Epis Church to the amount of about $70." J. B. Pinney to William McClain, MS letter, November 9, 1845. A.C.S. Papers.

[6] Minutes of the Synod of Georgia, printed, November, 1845, p. 11.

From there he went to New Orleans, where the Presbyterian Church was opened for his use, but he found little interest.[1] A side trip to several Presbyterian congregations in Mississippi proved more fruitful.[2] His return to the North took him through Memphis, where Presbyterians again proved to be his strongest supporters, although he found there was great ignorance in the city about the colonization movement.[3]

Those Presbyterians who expressed interest in colonization often found they had to overcome massive public apathy, and in some cases open hostility. A letter spoke of the difficulties one Presbyterian in Charlotte, North Carolina, encountered in trying to get subscribers to the African Repository, the A.C.S. periodical:

> I have faithfully circulated the repository round about here, yet to no advantage, as the numbers have all returned, without comment or remark probably not half read. The people about us have been tinctured or contaminated just enough with Abolitionism to look unfavorably on the operations of the A.C.S.--Nothing short of compentant (sic) Lectures will ever rally or set them right--with regret I am compelld to acknowledge that I cannot get a name added to your list of Subscribers.[4]

More revealing was a letter from Dr. Philip Lindsley, which also gives an insight into his own political views. In reviewing the course of the colonization cause in Tennessee during the last year he said:

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[1]"I make a slow progress here in getting funds. All the churches are too much occupied in their own matters to allow me a chance." Pinney to McClain, MS letter, January 13, 1846. A.C.S. Papers.

[2]Pinney to McClain, MS letter, December 22, 1845. A.C.S. Papers.

[3]Pinney to McClain, MS letter, February 17, 1846. A.C.S. Papers.

[4]Charles McNeil to William McClain, MS letter, January 2, 1846, A.C.S. Papers.

> It was a season also of extraordinary political excitement. And, unfortunately, the Colonization cause had become so strongly confounded in the popular mind with abolitionism, that it was not uncommon among certain demagogues to denounce the advocates of the former as aiming at the latter. We, that is, the friends of Colonization, were frequently advised, nay entreated, during the summer & autumn, to remain silent & inactive....Well, the election is over--& I fear the prospect is not much improved. The truth is, a powerful ultra pro-slavery party is getting up throughout the South: the object of which is openly & avowedly to perpetuate slavery among us, as a great national, republican, christian, glorious institution! Essential to our prosperity & happiness! and never to be assailed or questioned with impunity! This new state of things alarms & discourages many worthy sensible men, who are friendly to Colonization.... Indeed, I have heard some declare that they would now publically oppose it, rather than be suspected of a leaning towards abolitionism.--This latter being considered not merely as the worst heresy, but as the most enormous & disgraceful species of crime ever known or imagined among men.[1]

Presbyterian support for colonization during the 1840's did not conflict with the pro-slavery position of Southern Presbyterians. The reason is that colonization was seen totally as a movement for colonizing free blacks, and thus in no way directly connected with the abolition of slavery. The Watchman and Observer printed a series of letters addressed to the Virginia Legislature on the problem of free blacks; the conclusion was that the problem was precisely that for which the colonization movement existed.[2]

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[1] Philip Lindsley to William McClain, MS letter, December 27, 1844. A.C.S. Papers. Lindsley further suggested that an agent should be employed who would be able to draw sharply the distinctions between colonization and abolition.

Four years later the Synod of West Tennessee passed a resolution backing the A.C.S. A quorum was not present and the actions of the Synod were declared void for that year; however, the resolution was again passed the next year, when a quorum was present. Minutes of the Synod of West Tennessee, MS, October, 1848, Vol. 1, p. 226; October, 1849, Vol. 1, p. 257.

[2] Watchman and Observer, January 11, January 18, April 26, May 3, and May 10, 1849. The series was signed "Laocoon." See also the comments of the editor in the January 11 issue.

With the exception of the two individuals noted above in discussing anti-slavery sentiment in the 1840's,[1] we have noted no instance in which colonization was connected with the general abolition of slavery during this period by Southern Presbyterians.

In spite of this, however, some notable examples of Presbyterian slaveholders who freed their slaves for colonization can be found during this time. A pastor in Fredericksburg, Virginia, wrote the American Colonization Society about a young lady in his church who had fifteen slaves she wanted to send to Liberia; she was unable, however, to afford their transportation expenses.[2] A Presbyterian minister in Greensboro, Alabama, willed his twenty-four slaves to the Society; his will explained why he had not freed them during his lifetime:

> This I would do now, but they utterly refuse to leave me, protesting that they will not leave me until my death....I cannot meet death in peace while the consciousness of the fact is left that these faithful and pious servants are to be left in bondage--I feel that I am responsible to God for them and I cannot meet them in the judgment after leaving them to toil and hardships and slavery--I am a Presbyterian minister--My health is at this date feeble....My slaves I inherited from my father and through my deceased wife, all but one, whom I purchased to keep him with his wife.[3]

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[1] Supra, pp. 280-285.

[2] G. W. McPhail to William McClain, MS letter, November 11, 1845. A.C.S. Papers.

[3] Quoted in J. M. Witherspoon to William McClain, MS letter, December 15, 1845. A.C.S. Papers. The relation, if any, of Thomas Witherspoon to John Witherspoon of South Carolina (supra, p. is not known. A letter of J. B. Pinney to William McClain indicated that the slaves "will not accept the offer of liberty, preferring slavery!" MS letter, February 12, 1846, A.C.S. Papers. The final outcome of both this case and the case mentioned in the previous footnote is unknown.

By far the most innovative attempt at colonization and emancipation by a Southern Presbyterian was the plan devised by a wealthy eccentric in Louisiana, John McDonogh. McDonogh had been born in Baltimore, but had come to New Orleans as a young man, where his business acumen had soon made him extremely wealthy.[1] At one time he had been a leading member of the city's highest social circles, but had suddenly turned his back on that life and had become a virtual recluse on his plantation, which was across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. Here he devoted himself to his business enterprises; at one time he may have owned as many as ten plantations and hundreds of slaves.[2] According to his will--a remarkable document almost seventy pages in length--his essential motives in acquiring great wealth had been philanthropic. He spoke of the lawsuits that had plagued him from men who had tried to deprive him of some of his property:

> Infatuated men! They knew not that that was an attempt to take from themselves; for I was laboring and had labored all my life, not for myself, but for them, and their children....I preserved an onward course, determined (as the steward and servant of my Master) to do them good whether they would have it or whether they would not have it.[3]

His philanthropic interests were essentially in two areas. The

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[1]The most thorough study of McDonogh is Arthur George Nuhrah, "John McDonogh: Man of Many Facets." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Tulane University, 1950. It fails, however, to discuss in any depth the place of religion in McDonogh's life, although it is clear that McDonogh conceived of his philanthropic efforts as having their origin in his religion. A more popular study is William Talbot Childs, John McDonogh: His Life and Work, (Baltimore: Meyer and Thalheimer, 1939).

[2]Nuhrah, op.cit., p. 278.

[3]Quoted in Childs, op. cit., p. 18. Note also another statement from his will, quoted by Childs, pp. 46-47, which spoke specifically of his interest in education.

first was education, especially of poor children.[1] The second was colonization. In connection with the latter, McDonogh developed a scheme whereby his slaves could, in the span of about fifteen years, earn their freedom and passage to Liberia.

The plan had evolved when McDonogh had found it impossible to make his slaves observe the Sabbath in a proper manner. The reason, he decided, was that Sunday was the only day they had in which to pursue their own activities. He therefore changed their work routine so that each slave was required to work only five and one-half days instead of six; the extra half day was for his own use. McDonogh found that the problem of Sunday observance was thus solved. Upon reflection, however, McDonogh decided to give the slaves an opportunity to purchase their freedom, using the half day he had given them to "earn" their purchase price. He calculated that, if he credited them with a fair wage for their half day, in seven years (approximately) they would have earned enough money to "buy" another half day. In other words, their earnings from their free half day would be enough to pay one-eleventh of their purchase price. They then would "own" one-eleventh of their time, or one-half day out of their former five and one-half-day work week. With a full free day, they could then accumulate earnings faster, and in approximately four years they would have "purchased" a second full day. The process would continue until they had earned their full purchase price.

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[1] On his death his estate was valued at $1,800,000. $300,000 of this was to go to the American Colonization Society. The remainder was split evenly between the cities of New Orleans and Baltimore, and was to be used for the education of poor children. In New Orleans thirty-five schools were built under this endowment.

McDonogh actually put the plan into operation in 1825, and by 1840 a number of his slaves had earned their freedom. Because he feared the reaction that their release might have on slaves on other plantations (having pledged his slaves to strict secrecy), he delayed emancipation, but in 1842 a number embarked for Liberia. McDonogh, it will be observed, had retained all money that would have been paid in wages; he then used this to purchase slaves to replace those sent to Liberia. Shortly after sending the first group to Liberia McDonogh revealed the full details of his plans; they were published in a New Orleans newspaper, and reprinted later by the American Colonization Society.[1] The plan drew much attention, but in spite of efforts on his part to get others to adopt it, the scheme was not practical and few, if any, were willing to implement it. McDonogh, however, found it highly successful; not the least of the advantages was the fact that the productivity of his slaves increased enormously, a fact which he attributed to the incentive presented by the promised emancipation.

McDonogh's plan presents a strange mixture of motives and methods. McDonogh sincerely saw his project as a benevolent plan to give freedom to the slave population. Nuhrah suggests that "his religious awakening so stirred his humanitarian impulses that he came to regard slavery as a great moral stain threatening the happiness of his country."[2] Nevertheless, he

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[1] Self-Emancipation. A Successful Experiment on a Large Estate in Louisiana, by John McDonogh, Completed in 1840. (Reprinted from the Colonization Journal, February, 1862, n.p.). Our discussion of McDonogh's plan is based on his exposition in this work.

[2] Nuhrah, op. cit., p. 282.

also candidly admitted that the plan cost him nothing, and in fact that the increased productivity of his slaves had made it a very profitable plan personally. His real motives are difficult to discover. From his own statements it is clear that he felt slavery would eventually cease, partly because of the large number of immigrants:

> A few years more, and white labor in our country, from the natural as well as the foreign increase of our population, will be as cheap as it is now in France and Italy. Whenever that is the case...the slave-holder will not retain his slaves, will not agree to keep and support them, but will drive them away, as white labor will then cost less than it would require to feed, clothe, and lodge his slaves, besides being in other ways more profitable.[1]

He further was convinced that the two races would not be able to co-exist:

> Looking at the present state of these people among us, in the free as well as the slave states of the Union, is not enough....have you reflected on their situation and what is to become of them in times to come? My own opinion is,...that without the separation of the races, extermination of one or the other must inevitably take place. The two races can never inhabit together in a state of equality the same country.[2]

Upon his death a number of McDonogh's slaves were freed, under the provisions of his will, and sent to Liberia.

McDonogh's experiment was successful on the limited scale of his plantation. In terms of his broader hopes, however, it was a failure, and most considered him an eccentric. Like the few anti-slavery Southern Presbyterians in the 1840's, McDonogh is of interest mainly as a curiosity rather than as a representative of widespread sentiment.

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[1]Quoted in Childs, op. cit., p. 140.

[2]Quoted in Ibid., p. 121.

SECTIONALISM AND NATIONALISM DURING THE 1840's

As was true with slavery during the 1840's, there was very little development in the Southern Presbyterian understanding of their relationship to society. Virtually every element we have noted during the period of transition was restated and emphasized during the decade, while little which could be called new can be detected. To this there is one major exception, namely, the beginning of a true sectionalism which would become more evident in the next decade, and would lead eventually to war. This, however, was evident only toward the end of the 1840's.

In two major instances Southern Presbyterians rejected a sectional stance during the 1840's, although the first of these is not a clear-cut example. This was the controversy over slavery which threatened to disrupt the General Assembly in 1844 and 1845. We have noted previously that Southern Presbyterian reaction was mild compared with that during the mid-1830's, with very few open threats of withdrawal.[1] It would be mistaken to see in this, however, a decline in sectional concern over abolitionism; it was, rather, a confident belief that the General Assembly would not take action unfavorable to the South. Beneath the surface, however, the issue of abolition still lurked, and had there actually been a serious threat on the question from the Assembly, the South would no doubt have taken firm action. In a sense, therefore, Southern Presbyterians took a national, rather than sectional, stance during the 1844-1845 debates. From another

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[1]Supra, pp. 259-262.

standpoint, however, the fact that they did not react violently to the threat of agitation in the Assembly proves little, since they did not take the threat seriously.

More conclusive in demonstrating the national stance of Southern Presbyterians was their position on the war with Mexico. While the complex background of the War is beyond our present scope, it is significant that it was opposed by most Southern Presbyterians. In general, the South backed the War, with some seeing in it an opportunity to expand slavery into Texas; many in the North, on the other hand, opposed the War.

At first Southern Presbyterian opinion on the annexation of Texas was mixed. Benjamin Gildersleeve backed the annexation of Texas and defended Texas against charges by the New England press.[1] After moving to Richmond as editor of the Watchman and Observer he continued to back the cause. Shortly after the beginning of hostilities he wrote of the "joyful tidings" of a Mexican defeat.[2] A later article spoke of the volunteers who were rushing to aid the "glorious cause."[3] Shortly after this, however, the paper became silent on the issue.

There is reason to believe that Gildersleeve's opinion was not that of the majority of Southern Presbyterians. The clearest indication of this is a letter from a leading Virginia minister:

The Mexican war distresses me much. If I believed

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[1] Charleston Observer, July 19, 1845.

[2] Watchman and Observer, May 28, 1846.

[3] Ibid., August 6, 1846.

> it to be a righteous war I would not be troubled so much. I know of no one who thinks it a righteous war except the Editor of the Watchman. Does he get his instructions on this subject from Dr. Plumer? I view it as a war brought on by the wreckless folly of our executive. The way in which the Lord punishes guilty nations is by installing fools to reign over them. The president in his message to Congress has the audacity to say that the "blood of our citizens had been shed on our own soil," which is not true.[1]

A few weeks after this letter another Virginia minister, Dr. Francis McFarland, spoke out against the War from the pulpit--a highly unusual action for a Southern minister. Making reference to the peaceful settlement of the Northwest boundary dispute with Great Britain, McFarland asked why the same had not been possible with Mexico. "I verily believe if Mexico had been as potent an enemy as G. Britain we should have made more effort at Negotiation--but we despised her."[2] He then examined in detail the history of the events leading up to the War, hinting that American claims to Texas were unfounded. He then indicated that God was punishing the Nation for its sins:

> I have no doubt that National Pride is one of our crying sins which we should confess....I have no doubt also but we sin grievously in regard to our Rulers. We are not sufficiently careful in selecting men of high moral qualifications....Party Politics rules all. The noisy Demagogue of any party is too likely to succeed when the sober retiring man of worth & of principle is left unnoticed. Many elected to high offices are a disgrace to the nation.[3]

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[1]James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 26, 1846. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2]Francis McFarland, MS sermon, "Day of Humiliation and Prayer in View of our national difficulties & the evil of war--the Mexican War," July 5, 1846. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[3]Ibid., For a similar statement on the sin of electing evil politicians see James McKee, MS sermon, "Day of Thanksgiving," November, 1848. James McKee Papers, Montreat. McFarland also spoke of the sin of national pride in a later sermon, indicating that

Over a year later McFarland again spoke of the War from the pulpit. He used the War to illustrate his view of the warfare in which the Christian is engaged, but at points his opposition to the War itself was clear:

> There is great opposition to the annexation of additional Territory as the result of this war, from fears of the injurious tendency from too great extension, & diversities of interest, & Political conflicts. I think that those fears are to a great extent well founded. Not so the wars in which Christians are engaged....[1]

In Alabama Columbus Morrison, a Presbyterian layman, also expressed his views on the War in the privacy of his diary. As soon as the threat of war over Texas became evident he expressed doubt about the long term effects:

> Texas has accepted anexation (sic) to the United States--Emigration will now soon take place and reduce the value of Real Estate here. When too late for remedy our citizens begin to feel how impolitic was their zeal.[2]

A year later he spoke more directly about the War:

> The Steamer Louisa arrived this morning under heavy canonade with a requisition for force to fight the Mexicans--Fort Isobel is taken and 25 of Taylors men killed Who will go? Not I if I can help it....The cannon is firing this evening and effort making to get volunteers--It sounds rather strange on sunday beside the Church Bell--War is a wicked thing and this one without good cause.[3]

God was judging the nation partly because of pride in connection with victory in the Mexican War. MS sermon, "Day of Fast Recommended by the President for the removal of Cholera," August 3, 1849. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[1]Francis McFarland, MS sermon, December 5, 1847. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2]Columbus Morrison, MS diary, entry for July 31, 1845. University of North Carolina.

[3]Ibid., entry for May 10, 1846.

The most thorough analysis of the War among Southern Presbyterians came after the War was concluded, in two extended articles in the Southern Presbyterian Review. The author (unlike some other Presbyterians) argued that the United States had a legal right to annex Texas, but strongly criticised the American conduct toward Mexico, both before and during the War. Examining the actions of the President in taking aggressive action against Mexico, the writer contended that such a course was unworthy of a Christian nation:

> ...over and above the duty of our government to exercise very tender moderation towards Mexico, as it certainly did for a while, the very consideration of its having so done, in virtue of that point of Christian civilization at which we profess to have arrived, laid it under the greater obligation towards her, as a neighbor, to persevere in the same policy....But, to order the army as the President did, in his capacity of Commander-in-chief, to the seat of impending strife, at a time when the irritation of Mexico was at its height, without consultation with Congress then in session, seems to have implied either an opinion of the unconcern of every one, who was not a member of the administration, in the movements of the army and in the consequences of such, or else an apprehension that his plans would not be concurred in by the representatives of the people.[1]

The author also criticised the conduct of the War itself, holding that the invasion of undisputed Mexican territory was morally indefensible. He then continued with a list of ten evils which had been brought about by the War:

1. Sufferings of the soldiers, irrespectively of those necessary to the battlefield.
2. Sufferings from wounds and mutilations, not only of soldiers, but of peaceable citizens, of all ages, and of both sexes, during sieges.

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[1] /Philip Berry/ "The Mexican War Reviewed on Christian Principles," Southern Presbyterian Review, July, 1849, pp. 93-94. The entire article will be found on pp. 74-124.

3. Vindictive bloodshed on the field of battle, irrespective of the contest for victory, and on other occasions.
4. Wanton injuries to women.
5. Military habits of rapine and plunder.
6. Domestic afflictions.
7. The more than servile humiliation of the private soldier, and his constant exposure to arbitrary ill-usage.
8. The destruction of life, or of the capacity for the enjoyment of life.
9. The waste of national wealth.
10. The effect of war on the interests of morality and religion in the contending nations.[1]

In light of this list, it is not surprising that the author concluded with a strong pacifist statement:

> It has indeed been contended, as for a principle historically established, that wars have been indispensible to the advancement of civilization.... But that there is on that account any necessity for wars, whether in the form of a compulsory instrument, or of an appointed condition, we feel bound to deny on behalf of God's pledges to suffering humanity.... it is, on the whole, in spite of them, that a part of the human family advances to its destined moral attainment.[2]

An article in the following issue by the same author made little direct reference to the Mexican War, but spoke persuasively for the end of war as a national policy.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[2] Ibid., p. 117.

[3] /Philip Berry/ "On the Means of Preventing War," Southern Presbyterian Review, October, 1849, pp. 170-200.

The only Southern Presbyterian judicatory to note the War was apparently the Synod of Mississippi. The Synod had been petitioned by the Presbytery of Brazos, in Texas, to become a part of the Synod in 1845, which was approved; this may explain the Synod's interest in the War. (Minutes of Presbytery of Brazos, MS, April, 1845, Volume 1, p. 83; April, 1846, Volume 2, p. 5). At its October, 1846, meeting the Synod made the following statement, which also contains a pacifist strain: "Whereas, our beloved country has become involved in war with the Republic of Mexico; and whereas, we deem war in all its forms, whether foreign or civil, a great calamity, and a great barrier to the spread of the Gospel; therefore be it unanimously resolved, That it be

While Southern Presbyterians generally exhibited a national stance during the Mexican War, a third event caused them to take a decidedly sectional stance, and was a harbinger of the transition on sectionalism that would come in the following decade. The event was the introduction of new controversy over slavery in the Congress, in connection with the so-called Wilmot Proviso, which prohibited the expansion of slavery into any territory acquired from Mexico.

The Southern Presbyterian reaction to the proposed restriction on slavery was quick and strong. After the House of Representatives passed the Proviso in early 1847, the leading Southern Presbyterian paper commented:

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recommended to all our Ministers and Churches to make the state of our country the subject of special and continued prayer... that God who rules over all nations may speedily interpose to bring about and establish a just, honorable and permanent peace, between the United States and Mexico; and that the happy friendship, which now exists between our own and all other nations, may remain for ever uninterrupted." Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi, printed, October, 1846, p. 93.

The pacifist sentiment indicated here was surprisingly common among Southern Presbyterians, and was not confined to the period of the Mexican War. Southern Presbyterian papers frequently carried news of the American Peace Society and other similar organizations, and often commended the peace movement. They likewise printed numerous anti-war anecdotes and, occasionally, pacifist speeches. (See, for an example of the latter, the speech of Thomas Grimke in the Watchman and Observer, October 2, 9, and 16, 1845). There was also occasional criticism of the romantic militarism which characterized many in the South. (See, for example, Watchman of the South, August 5, 1841). We would therefore disagree with the statement of Clement Eaton that "The pacifist movement...made little headway in the South." (C. Eaton, Freedom of Thought...., p. 322). The statement is true if consideration is only given to formally organized peace societies; it requires some modification, however, in light of frequent Southern Presbyterian statements. This pacifist leaning, incidently, may be a further reason why Southern Presbyterians opposed secessionist doctrines, which would of necessity have endorsed the use of force.

> It is almost needless to say that there can be but one voice in the South in opposition to any Bill to which such a proviso is attached. And that voice will be heard. Should it become a law, it will be regarded as a violation of all former compromises between the North and the South; and as only an incipient measure towards further action involving the interests and independence of the Southern States.[1]

Continued controversy over the extension of slavery into new territories the following year again met with a similar reaction. The Watchman and Observer raised the spectre of civil war as a definite possibility, and warned

> that should the question of disunion be ever brought to a practical test, there will be instead of a peaceful separation, collision and strife and bloodshed, such as have rarely been witnessed in the contests between independent nations--and all for what? For the gratification of a spirit of fanaticism at the North (where the forms of fanaticism are varied and rife)--which under the pretence of sympathy for the negro, for whom no real sympathy is felt--would involve in ruin a Union that has been greatly blessed--do not "the good men of the North" yet understand that their past interference with Southern Institutions has in many ways proved injurious, without affording a solitary countervailing benefit?[2]

In spite of such statements, however, Southern Presbyterians in general were optimistic as the end of the decade approached. Some, for example, embraced the popular doctrine of "manifest destiny," convinced that the nation's future consisted of almost limitless expansion and prosperity. The most effusive expression of this came from a New School minister in

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[1] Watchman and Observer, February 25, 1847. See also the issues of March 11, March 25, and April 1, 1847, for other editorial comments on the Proviso. The only other Southern Presbyterian paper being published at this time was the New Orleans Presbyterian; unfortunately no copies from this period are apparently extant.

[2] Ibid., July 6, 1848.

the South:

> We are fully aware of the great dangers which threaten our union as one people, and our prosperity as a nation. But, not too sanguine we trust, we see heaven's bow of hope, bright and resplendent, arching over our whole land, the fit emblem of the career which opens for us.... We behold our vast territory extending from Canada to Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We see the American Anglo-Saxon race, with their numbers swollen by large streams of foreign immigrants, spreading itself over this immense region,--the forest falling before them as if by the might of the tornado--green fields and waving harvests taking the place of the primeval wilderness, like a new creation, and villages and cities springing up around them, as if by magic.[1]

The author went on to say that this did not mean North and South would remain under one government, "But we are fully persuaded that, if we separate, it will be without civil war....we will then be two sister, neighboring republics."[2]

In the final weeks of the decade Presbyterians looked forward expectantly to the second half of the century. The Watchman and Observer quoted with approval the words of a New England paper on the Union: "No more surely is the state ordained of God, than the people of these United States are ordained to be ONE people, one body politic, by Him who 'hath made of one blood all nations....'"[3] Such optimism, however, was fragile,

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[1]Rev. James McChain, "The Probable Destiny of our Country, and the Means to attain that Destiny." Calvinistic Magazine (Second Series), November, 1848, pp. 329-330. See also a similar statement of James Henley Thornwell in a letter written to his wife in 1845, quoted in Thornwell, Life, pp. 287-288. Thornwell, however, expressed a desire to embrace as much territory as possible, including Texas. The letter was written before the War began, and Thornwell's later views on the War are uncertain. He was, however, one of the editors of the Southern Presbyterian Review, which contained articles critical of the War.

[2]Watchman and Observer, November 29, 1849.

and in the decade to follow Southern Presbyterians found themselves increasingly moving away from their national stance. Less than two weeks before the end of the year the Watchman and Observer noted the fierce controversy over the choice of Speaker in the House of Representatives, and expressed pessimism over the long-term effects:

> We allude to this state of affairs with pain, and not without some apprehension that should there be an adjustment of present difficulties, it will be but a compromise to be broken as other compromises have been, and attended with consequences the suggestion of which is now repulsive to every patriot breast.[1]

The events of the 1850's fully justified the paper's pessimism.

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[1] Ibid., December 20, 1849.

PART III. THE LATER PERIOD

CHAPTER II. SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS (OLD SCHOOL AND NEW SCHOOL) IN THE 1850'S: THE TRANSITION IN SECTIONALISM

CHAPTER TWO

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS (OLD SCHOOL AND NEW SCHOOL) IN THE 1850's: THE TRANSITION IN SECTIONALISM

During the 1850's the United States was buffeted by a series of internal crises of a sectional nature. It is impossible to say at what point, if any, civil war became inevitable, but it is clear that the decade saw the two sections increasingly drifting apart, with a dangerous rise in the hostility of each section toward the other.

These crises had a deep and lasting impact on Southern Presbyterians. In essence, they brought about a fundamental change in Southern Presbyterian attitudes respecting the American nation. Formerly Southern Presbyterians had taken a national, rather than sectional, stance on many issues. During the 1850's, however, a transition occurs in their thinking, and more and more sectional considerations take precedence. Just as we have spoken of a "period of transition" on the question of slavery, so we may now speak of a "period of transition" on the question of sectionalism. As was true with slavery, the transition in sectionalism can be divided into three sections, although (as with slavery) the divisions are not sharp. However, it is possible to speak of an "initial impulse" toward transition; we would see this as the Southern Presbyterian reaction to the slavery controversies of the later 1840's, especially the Wilmot Proviso. It is likewise feasible to speak of a "movement toward consensus"; this, we would contend, was brought about by the

events of the 1850's. Finally, there came a point which can be termed "the end of diversity," a direct result of the events of 1860-1861. Unlike the period of transition in slavery, however, the period of transition in sectionalism took place at virtually the same time throughout the South, with comparatively little variation between geographical areas. We shall also note the close relationship between the developing sectionalism and slavery.

While chronological divisions within the decade are somewhat artificial, we shall examine the 1850's in three parts. The first section deals with the years 1850-1852, a period which ends with the election of Franklin Pierce as President. The second section examines the four years of Pierce's administration, 1853-1856. The final division looks at the remaining years of the decade, 1857-1859.

FROM 1850 THROUGH 1852

It was immediately apparent to Southern Presbyterians that the new decade would probably bring new and severe challenges to the South, centering around the question of slavery. An anonymous writer in the Southern Presbyterian Review examined a number of books relating to the conflicts between North and South, and expressed a deep pessimism about the future:

> We cannot repress a sigh from our very heart, as we take up the pen to discuss the subject of these publications. Its magnitude and difficulty are enough to make any mind serious and even sad. We are almost ready to despair, too, of a satisfactory and peaceful settlement of the questions it involves. The conviction that the season for discussion has passed, and the time for action has come, is also growing upon us. We have scarcely a hope that aught we shall say, will influence the result so much as a hair's breadth.[1]

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[1] Southern Presbyterian Review, January, 1850, pp. 337-338.

The reviewer went on to say that the basic problem was slavery:

> The south has met her assailant on every field of debate, political, moral, and religious. And if any thing has ever been proved and demonstrated again and again, it is THE LAWFULNESS OF SLAVERY, whether tested by the divine word of Holy Scripture, or tested by the conclusions of human reason....So clear and triumphant do we consider the argument on the side of the South, that where it has failed to convince, we believe further discussion to be useless....the great elements of opposition to slavery, /are/ in a growing radicalism; a feeling of inequality and disadvantage, or mean envy; political ambition; and competition of labour....They are gathering to a head against the South, and combining for a contest in which they will neither stay nor spare till they win the prize.[1]

During the time the above was being written the matter of slavery was causing controversy in the Congress. Southern Presbyterians immediately began to express concern about the debates; typical was the statement of the editor of the Watchman and Observer:

> The general sentiment of the South is that the aggressions of the North upon what has ever been regarded as their constitutional rights has reached a point which ought not to be much longer endured....And yet there are probably none who would not deprecate the necessity of action. The hope still prevails that an over-ruling Providence will avert the dreaded evil.[2]

The editor then continued by quoting the proposed compromise measures of Henry Clay, although disclaiming any intention of meddling in politics. A few weeks later the editor reprinted a series of resolutions from the Virginia Legislature which urged the calling of a Southern Convention and threatened to join with other Southern states "in the adoption of any measures that may be necessary to provide for their mutual defense." The resolutions were introduced with a short note indicating that they expressed the views of all Virginians--including, presumably, the editor and his readers.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 338, 345.

[2] Watchman and Observer, February 7, 1850.

[3] Ibid., February 21, 1850. At least one Southern Presbyterian layman,

The series of measures which are known collectively as the "Compromise of 1850" did little to ease sectional tensions as far as Southern Presbyterians were concerned. It was at this point that attitudes began to assume a slightly different character. Increasingly Southern Presbyterian papers began to express strong anti-Northern and pro-Southern statements, saying that the South was being unjustly persecuted by the North, or at least by the more radical elements in the North.

This tendency was seen first in the reaction to specific actions, especially the Fugitive Slave Act. The Act, which provided for the return of runaway slaves who had fled to the North, was felt by many in the North to be grossly unjust in its provisions but Southern Presbyterians (in common with most in the South) applauded its passage and condemned Northern opposition. Typical was the statement of the Southern Presbyterian, which was widely circulated in South Carolina especially:

> Though Congress was but carrying into effect the express provision of the Constitution of the United States, in the protection which it extends to the property of southern men; these "higher law" men denounce the Constitution, and the action of Congress, as contrary to justice and humanity...What then is the position occupied by those, who are so violent in opposition to the Constitution? Traitors in heart and tongue, to the Supreme law of this Republic--open heart and tongue, to the Union--debased ingrates to the people of those States, who have so long joined with them in the support of common laws and common Institutions, and from whose labors, their immense wealth has been chiefly realized.[1]

William Law, Jr., went to the Nashville Convention; Law was a wealthy planter from Darlington, South Carolina. See William Law, Jr., to J. J. Evans, MS letter, April 29, 1850. William Law Papers, University of South Carolina.

[1]Southern Presbyterian, October 24, 1850.

The same paper later lamented that sentimentalism was taking the place of law in the North.[1] Both the Southern Presbyterian and the Watchman and Observer took frequent notice of Northern reaction to the Act.[2]

Beyond the specific question of the Fugitive Slave Act, however, the general agitation of the question of slavery at this time led to a fervent justification of the South which can almost be termed "sectional chauvinism." This likewise had both a specific and a general dimension. The specific aspect was evident in the renewed and consistent defense of slavery. James Henley Thornwell was responsible for an extended defense of slavery approved by the Synod of South Carolina; it was the most comprehensive defense of the institution approved by a Southern church court.[3] The Southern Presbyterian defended slavery and compared the settlement of Canaan by the Israelites and their slaves with the settlement of California, urging that slavery should also be permitted there.[4]

The Southern Presbyterian justification of slavery was also evident in the reaction to the publication in early 1852 of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The immediate reaction was one of scorn. A Presbyterian in North Carolina mentioned the

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[1] Ibid., May 22, 1851.

[2] For major statements see Southern Presbyterian, November 7, 1850; February 20, February 27, 1851, and Watchman and Observer, July 25, 1850; January 23, April 17, May 29, September 25, 1851. See also Southern Presbyterian Review, January, 1851, p. 426, and July, 1851, p. 144.

[3] The report is reprinted in the Southern Presbyterian Review, January, 1852, pp. 380-394. It contained no new pro-slavery arguments, however.

[4] Southern Presbyterian, July 11, 1850.

book in a letter to a relative: "Speaking of servants have you read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'?...It is deeply interesting & is a great slander on the South."[1] The Southern Presbyterian termed it a work "replete with the very opposite of what the relation of Master and servant at the south really is...."[2] The same paper also accused the author of making vast sums of money from the work.[3] The paper likewise took note of Mrs. Stowe's visit to Scotland in 1853, expressing the hope that she would take note of the plight of the working class in Britain; Edinburgh's slums were far worse than slave quarters in the South.[4] The Watchman and Observer also took note of the book, terming it a "fable."[5] The same paper noted gleefully that Mrs. Stowe had been caught trying to smuggle some linen through customs on her return from Great Britain.[6] A more balanced reaction was that of Simeon Colton, a New School pastor in North Carolina, noted in the privacy of his diary:

> During the past week I have read a book called Uncle Tom's Cabin written by a daughter of Dr. Beecher, and intended to be a picture of slavery as existing in the south. The picture is high, overwrought but the incidents are such as may have happened. Uncle Tom the hero of the story is represented as a good man, and I have felt myself much reproved when I consider how much I have been disposed to complain under the allotments of

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[1] 'M.R.L.' to 'Susan,' MS letter, December 5, 1852. Drury Lacy Papers, Union Theological Seminary.

[2] Southern Presbyterian, July 15, 1852.

[3] Ibid., November 25, 1852.

[4] Ibid., December 30, 1852; June 3, 1853.

[5] Watchman and Observer, March 31, 1853.

[6] Ibid., October 13, 1853. For additional comments on the book and its author see Southern Presbyterian, October 14, October 21, October 28, November 4, December 2, 1852; May 26, August 12, August 25, September 1, 1853; September 22, 1855; June 20, 1857.

Providence, and when I compare my feelings with his; O that I might be more submissive & live more to the glory of God.[1]

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[1]Simeon Colton, MS diary, entry for June 27, 1852. Simeon Colton Papers, University of North Carolina.

During the decade of the 1850's there were isolated anti-slavery sentiments expressed by some Southern Presbyterians. For some, the practical difficulties of slavery were oppressive. Typical was the statement of Dr. Benjamin M. Smith, a professor at Union Theological Seminary: "Oh what trouble,--running sore, constant pressing weight, perpetual wearing, dripping, is this patriarchal institution! What miserable folly for men to cling to it as something heaven-descended. And here we and our children after us must groan under the burden--our hands tied from freeing ourselves....I am determined now to avail myself of the first clear opening to move out....What would I not give to be freed from responsibility for these poor creatures. Oh, that I could know just what is right." B. M. Smith, diary entries for December 21 and December 31, 1858, quoted in Francis R. Flourney, Benjamin Mosby Smith, 1811-1893, (Richmond, Richmond Press, Inc., 1947), p. 74. The most remarkable anti-slavery statement from a Southern Presbyterian, however, was an unpublished MS prepared by Dr. Eli W. Caruthers, "American Slavery and the Immediate Duty of Southern Slaveholders," which is now in the library of Duke University. It was written sometime after 1840, and revised in the 1850's; a preface written in 1865 is included in the MS. The work is a sharp attack on slavery, contending that Southern slavery was radically different from that existing in Old and New Testament times, being much harsher. Caruthers spoke of the oppression of the Jews by Pharaoh and compared it with that of the American slaves: "The chosen race were then his bondsmen, oppressed by hard service & doomed, so far as he could doom them, to a perpetual subjection; but the time fixed in the divine purpose for their emancipation had come &, by the ministry of Moses & Aaron, his accredited agents, he demanded their release....The same demand is now made & in a similar way upon all who hold their fellow men in bondage & results equally fatal will, sooner or later, follow a persistent disobedience." (p. 3). Caruthers prepared his MS for publication, but apparently despaired of finding a publisher. As far as is known he never spoke from the pulpit against slavery. A summary of Caruthers' life, including a very brief summary of the MS, will be found in George Troxler, "Eli Caruthers: A Silent Dissenter in the Old South," Journal of Presbyterian History, June, 1967, pp. 95-111.

A Southern Presbyterian in Mississippi, James Cotten, who was a relative of Rev. James Smylie, freed his slaves about 1857, although the case is obscure. A note appended to a MS letter of Cotten makes the following comment: "He bought a tract of land near Zenia, Ohio, freed a number of his slaves, and divided that land among them." A receipt for taxes for 1857 (dated February 18, 1858) shows he had 136 free negroes in that year. The letter and tax receipt are in the Dalton Watson Collection, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

Beyond the specific defense of the institution of Southern slavery was the more general affirmation that the South was superior to the North, or at least that the Northern view of the South was incorrect. The Southern Presbyterian, answering the charge of a Boston paper that the South was a "Sodom" because of slavery, commented:

> Without stopping to enquire whether there are any Sodoms in Boston or New York,...we plainly say--you must stop those wholesale and infamous slanders of your brethren at the South! You who have never set foot in a Southern State, passing anathemas upon its whole population--you but betray your own ignorance and expose a demon-like disposition which were better concealed. Why, gentlemen, the negroes themselves are getting ashamed of you--hundreds of thousands of whom would, in morals and religion, compare well with the citizens of Boston.[1]

The paper also asserted that foreign newspapers slandered the South.[2] A letter to the editor of the Southern Presbyterian commended the paper, and indicated the degree of sectional feeling in the deep South:

> ...we need just such a journal as the "Southern Presbyterian"....We have long enough drawn from Northern fountains, and sent out from our midst those funds, which if appropriated at home, would have given us, years ago, just such a paper as we now have, and many of the same character in our Southern Zion....Now, in particular, is it the duty of all Southern men, not only in the religious, but also in every department of usefulness, to remember the interests of their own country. To patronize Southern Institutions of every kind--Religious, Literary, Professional, Benevolent, Philanthropic....few, very few, of the Northern journals, manifest right sentiments toward us. The bitterness of the general Northern feeling towards us on account of our peculiar institution, shows itself as much in the religious as in the secular press, and why should we contribute our money, or our influence, to their support, especially when, by so doing, we injure ourselves.[3]

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, December 5, 1850.

[2] Ibid., April 3, 1851.

[3] Ibid., September 18, 1851. The correspondent is not identified, but was from Savannah, Georgia.

Such comments were not confined to the Southern Presbyterian. The Watchman and Observer reprinted an editorial from a Galveston, Texas, paper urging Southern educational endeavors:

> We can no longer afford to have our youths educated amidst principles which if they ever should become predominant in our national council will inevitably prove the overthrow of this, the happiest, the freest, and the best government the world ever beheld. It is time, high time, that the parents of the South were taking measures to educate their children on Southern soil.[1]

The same paper also complained that Northern papers presented a distorted view of the South.[2] The editor also urged support for the two Southern Presbyterian seminaries:

> ...were such Institutions needed at first for raising up for the church a Southern Ministry, much more are they needed now. This will be obvious to every one who reflects upon the results of the great political agitations in which the country has of late been involved.[3]

In spite of a sharp upturn in sectional feeling among Southern Presbyterians, there was also a strong current of national or unionist feeling which acted as a balance to the rising section-

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[1] Watchman and Observer, April 3, 1851. See also the issue of March 13, 1851, in which the editor stated that the slavery agitation had had one good side effect, in that it had made Southerners more aware of the resources of the South, which would make her less dependent on the North.

[2] Ibid., May 9, 1850.

[3] Ibid., December 25, 1851. A bizarre incident in Mississippi indicated the depth of sectional feeling. Rumors became prominent that a student had been expelled from Oakland College by the president, Dr. Jeremiah Chamberlain, because he had presented a Southern rights speech. Handbills were circulated expressing the charge, and Dr. Chamberlain was murdered by a man accusing him of defaming the South. The charge had been denied by Dr. Chamberlain. A later handbill asserted that the original charge had been an electioneering trick to divert votes from candidates favoring a unionist position, and accused the author of the original handbill of being guilty of the murder. The sermon of J. B. Stratton at Chamberlain's funeral likewise denied the charge, saying Chamberlain had carefully avoided politics. Copies of the handbills, Stratton's sermon, and miscellaneous clippings are in the Jeremiah Chamberlain file, Montreat.

alism during this period. The conflicting emotions of some were indicated in a letter of a Presbyterian who had moved from his native state of South Carolina to Georgia:

> I love the state of my adoption. ...But I am proud of my native state. "If this be treason make the most of it." Yes, "with all her faults" I love the gallant little state which besides giving me a wife and children honors and feeds me. And because I love and honor her--because I pray daily for her prosperity and happiness--because I shudder at the possibility of her "shooting madly from her sphere," I cannot abide the notion of her going into the loneliness, the obscurity, the contempt of separate nationality.[1]

A more positive unionist position was that of Dr. Daniel Baker, the noted Southern Presbyterian evangelist, who had just concluded a tour in the North:

> I do think if my Southern brethren knew the true state of feeling at the North--if they knew how respectfully and kindly they are regarded...I do think the influence could not but be soothing and happy....I am an AMERICAN, sir--I love my country--I love all her noble institutions, and I rejoice that I was born in this land of freedom and equal rights--in this happy land--this glorious land! ...Should our "GLORIOUS UNION" perish, surely freedom will give such a shriek as she never gave before.[2]

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[1]Major J. Williams to James Henley Thornwell, MS letter, July 14, 1851. Anderson-Thornwell Papers, University of North Carolina.

[2]Southern Presbyterian, December 5, 1850. For an extremely strong unionist statement from a Virginian see David Campbell to "nephew," MS letter, January 26, 1850, and David Campbell to unidentified correspondent, MS letter, January 26, 1850. David Campbell Papers, Duke University. Another letter in the collection identifies Campbell as former governor of Virginia; he was in office from 1837-1840. In spite of his position, little biographical information is available; he is not listed in DAB. A letter from Rev. William Henry Foote in the Campbell Papers indicates he may have been a Presbyterian, but the identification is not certain. In South Carolina, James Henley Thornwell, the leading theologian in the Southern Church, also expressed strong unionist sentiments: "The state of feeling here is really appalling, and such sentiments as those which I have ventured to express are anything but popular....I still hope that the arm which has been so often stretched out in our behalf, will be interposed again. South Carolina, however, seems bent upon secession....You cannot imagine how the matter preys upon my spirits. It is the unceasing burden of my prayers." James Henley Thornwell to Robert J.

In other ways Southern Presbyterians expressed their concern over threatened disunion. The Synod of Georgia declared a day of fasting in light of the political problems in the nation.[1] A correspondent to the Watchman and Observer urged prayer for the nation's leaders, especially during the time of sectional strife.[2] A similar plea came from the editor of the Southern Presbyterian:

> It is the duty of every praying man, at all times to pray for his country; but especially now, while passions, fanaticism, evil speaking, fiery animosities, bitter denunciations, and all the evil that Satan can instigate over our whole country, are working the ruin of our peace and the destruction of our prosperity. We all wish to see every right adjusted, every wrong righted, and our whole country united in a union bonded in justice, peace, and prosperity. Let us then pray. Pray for ourselves... pray for hearts willing to cede much, if only the great whole can be preserved....[3]

In spite of such statements, however, the general attitude of many Southern Presbyterians (particularly in the lower Atlantic states) was no longer purely national. As debate raged in the nation Southern Presbyterians tended to defend the South and at times expressed doubts about the viability of continuing the Federal Union. On the other hand, a reservoir of unionist sentiment was still apparent.

This mixed attitude was exhibited, for example, by the Southern Presbyterian. The paper was accused of being a "submission journal" because it had taken a unionist position. In answer, the

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Breckinridge, March 28, 1851, in Thornwell, Life, p. 477. See also Thornwell's letter to Dr. Hooper, March 8, 1850, in Thornwell, Life, pp. 477-478.

[1] Minutes of the Synod of Georgia, printed, November, 1850, pp. 19-20.

[2] Watchman and Observer, February 13, 1851.

[3] Southern Presbyterian, November 28, 1850.

editor asserted that the paper had consistently taken a pro-Southern position:

> ...we fearlessly assert, that in the columns of no other religious paper South of the Potomac within the last two years, have the institutions of the South been so repeatedly and elaborately defended, and that upon the moveless foundation of the word of God; nor has the character of the South been with more promptness, boldness and firmness defended against the assaults made upon it, come from what source they might.[1]

Nevertheless, the editor refused to take a stand on such questions as the right of a state to secede, because it was a political matter and therefore beyond the concern of a religious paper. "The discussion of no political question have we ever admitted into our columns; in no political turmoil have we engaged."[2] The editor also affirmed that forces in the North were at work which would hopefully calm the agitation which was threatening the South, and he had felt it his duty to commend such actions. The statement at first does not appear to be pro-union, and it does indicate a strong sectional bias. However, the editor's refusal to endorse those favoring secession, and his statements concerning moderate forces in the North, indicate at least a degree of national sentiment.[3] At the same time, Presbyterians in the lower Atlantic states--especially South Carolina--

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, February 13, 1851.

[2] Ibid., The statement is open to debate, of course; in defending the South the editor was tacitly taking a political stand. The immediate reason for the accusation against the paper had been the editor's publication of the Georgia Platform, a unionist statement drawn up by a state convention in December, 1850. It is of passing interest that one of the leading men behind the Platform was Howell Cobb, whose brother, Thomas R. R. Cobb, was a prominent Presbyterian layman. Letters in the T.R.R.Cobb collection of the University of Georgia indicate the two brothers shared common political viewpoints.

[3] The editor attacked militant pro-Southerners who wanted to conquer Cuba and make it another slave state. See the issues of May 31, 1850, and May 8, 1851.

were clearly moving toward a sectional stance.

This shift from a completely national stance--while still retaining a desire to see the Union preserved--was also evident in the Southern Presbyterian Review. A reviewer of a number of Northern sermons on the necessity of working toward preserving the Union commented:

> ...the general spirit of all of them meets our most cordial approbation. We sympathize with our brethren at the North in their laudable and Christian efforts to arrest an agitation which aims alike at the destruction of the Government and the subversion of religion. At the present crisis a perilous responsibility rests upon the non-slaveholding States of this Union. It is for them to say whether the conditions of our Federal Compact shall be faithfully observed, and the Union preserved in its integrity, or whether the Southern States shall be driven, in vindication of their rights, their honour and their safety, to organize a distinct Government for themselves....the Union is the creature of the Constitution. The destruction of one is and must be sooner or later the destruction of the other.[1]

In summary, therefore, the agitation over slavery in the early years of the 1850's brought about a significant change in Southern Presbyterian attitudes. Whereas formerly national sentiments had predominated, it was now clear that sectional sentiments were beginning to prevail.

As the election of 1852 approached there was optimism that sectional strife was declining. The Southern Presbyterian reprinted a Northern sermon which expressed the belief that sectionalism was lessening.[2] Southern Presbyterian papers generally avoided comments on sectional matters toward the end of 1852, reflecting the decline in controversy on a national level.[3]

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[1] Southern Presbyterian Review, January, 1851, pp. 444, 448.

[2] Southern Presbyterian, July 29, 1852.

[3] At least one Southern Presbyterian expressed disapproval of the

FROM 1853 THROUGH 1856

It was perhaps significant that one of the strongest statements during the years of Pierce's administration from a Southern Presbyterian came at a time when anti-slavery agitation was comparatively quiet. The statement was from the editor of the Southern Presbyterian:

> Our readers, like ourselves, are tired of the controversy. We honestly believe that our people are firmly preparing for the argument of "THE LAST RESORT." When Reason and Revelation fail to close a discussion, it is time for argument to close....Many of the intelligent and pious of the Northern people deprecate the agitation, and perhaps the majority are disposed faithfully to adhere to the compromise. Still they are all anti-slavery--and their moral influence is against us, in every aspect of the question.[1]

The editor also suggested that an independent Southern nation would receive support from Great Britain.

In light of such statements, it is not surprising that the controversy over the admission of Kansas and Nebraska became a new source of irritation for many Southern Presbyterians. Here again the major center of dissent was the lower Atlantic states. Shortly after the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Congress, the

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election of Franklin Pierce. "The results of the late election have so completely astounded every body in this region, that neither Whig nor Demo. has so far recovered as to say any thing about it. I trust it will be over-ruled for good, but there seems to be no motive presented to statesmen to distinguish themselves now, for if they wish to be promoted they had better hold back & not distinguish themselves by any effort for the good of the country. I do believe when Gen. Pierce was nominated not one in a hundred of the people of the U.S. knew there was such a man living. It is a delightful thought that God reigns." Alexander Wilson to unidentified correspondent, MS letter, November 26, 1852. Heartt-Wilson Papers, University of North Carolina. Wilson was pastor of a church in Alamance County, North Carolina. It is impossible to generalize from one letter about the preference of other Southern Presbyterians in the election, and information is otherwise lacking.

[1]Southern Presbyterian, September 8, 1853.

Southern Presbyterian formally declared that its long-standing policy of silence on political matters would be broken temporarily; the Act had too many moral implications for the editor to remain silent. The editor argued that it was unethical for slaveholders to be excluded from a new state; the Missouri Compromise of 1820 "was a direct violation of the rights of the citizens of the slaveholding States."[1] He further argued that the powers of the Federal Government were limited, and legislation by Congress forbidding slavery in a new territory was unconstitutional. He therefore endorsed the proposal of Senator Douglas calling for popular sovereignty in each new state on the slavery question.

The passage of the Act, however, did little to resolve the problem of slavery in new states. Anti-slavery forces in the North and pro-slavery elements in the South began a spirited campaign to influence the outcome of the slavery question in Kansas, and fighting soon broke out in the territory. It is significant that the major Southern Presbyterian comments on the violence came from the upper South; by contrast, the Southern Presbyterian took little notice of the matter and the accompanying threat to the Union.[2] A minister in Virginia wrote to a fellow pastor:

> The state of things in Kansas has been rather alarming. What is to be the end of this dreadful subject of slavery? Happy it is that the Lord reigneth over the nations.[3]

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, February 23, 1854.

[2] An exception was a letter of a recent visitor to the North: "So true it is, that there is a variety and a contrariety of views, tastes and habits, between the North and the South; yet are we, after all, but one country, and one brotherhood; and let us indulge no other sentiment than that of peace, harmony, and union. The question of division is too painful a one to be, for a moment, entertained." Southern Presbyterian, July 19, 1856.

[3] J. McKennon to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 18, 1856. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

The editor of the Central Presbyterian (successor to the Watchman and Observer) expressed great alarm at the course of the matter, seeing in it a grave threat to the Union:

> Our common country is in danger of disunion. It is almost with trembling that we note it, lest its very publication may tend somehow to familiarize our minds with the dread fact, and thus to precipitate it....Already do the low mutterings of the rising cloud of civil war come from our Western border....if disunion comes, it must be accompanied or followed by war. Let no one fancy that such a rupture can be peacefully effected, and that two republics can quietly arise in place of one....CHRISTIANS OF AMERICA; will ye suffer this? If such a crime against God and man be wrought in this land of thirty thousand evangelical ministers, and four millions of Christians, how burning the sarcasm which it will contain against your Christianity![1]

Francis McFarland likewise warned his congregation in Virginia that civil war could come, and gave thanks that God had prevented it so far.[2] As the situation in Kansas worsened the Central Presbyterian renewed its concern:

> There has never been a time when Christians should pray with more fervor for their country than the present, for there has never been a time when it was more needed. We know of no marks that history furnishes of approaching convulsion in a country, that may not be seen steadily increasing in our own.[3]

A week later the editor proposed that moderates in the North and South should unite to save the Union.[4] The same issue castigated

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[1] Central Presbyterian, March 29, 1856. The editorial is attributed to Robert Lewis Dabney, the leading theologian at Union Seminary, by his biographer. Thomas Cary Johnson, The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney (Richmond, Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903), p. 158. Hereafter referred to as Johnson, Dabney.

[2] Francis McFarland, MS sermon, November 15, 1855. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[3] Central Presbyterian, June 14, 1856.

[4] Ibid., June 21, 1856.

Representative Preston Brooks for his violent attack on Senator Sumner.[1] A week later the paper carried the text of a united appeal by clergymen of various denominations in Richmond, urging efforts to bring about unity in the nation. The meeting of Richmond clergy was chaired by T.V. Moore, a Presbyterian minister, and the declaration was signed by the other Presbyterian ministers of the city.[2]

In spite of expressions of concern for the state of the Union, it was clear that Presbyterians throughout the South were continuing to move toward a completely sectional stance. In the view of most, the entire problem was with the North; if the rights of the South would only be recognized, the problems facing the nation would be resolved. A visitor from South Carolina to Massachusetts found the State deluded:

> In political matters there is nothing in the prospect here that can give pleasure to a lover of his country's welfare. They are all gone after false gods. Poor old Massachusetts!![3]

In Southern eyes the North had a false conception of the South. Reflecting the more extreme sectionalism of South Carolina, the Southern Presbyterian carried frequent notices of hostile criticism in the Northern press.[4] On one occasion the editor expressed despair

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[1] Ibid., The Southern Presbyterian also condemned the Brooks-Sumner attack, although not in as strong terms. See Southern Presbyterian, July 19, 1856.

[2] Central Presbyterian, June 28, 1856.

[3] C. G. Edwards to Abner Porter, MS letter, May 11, 1856, Abner Porter Papers, Montreat.

[4] For examples see the Southern Presbyterian, August 17, 1854; August 2, August 23, November 1, 1856. We have noted no similar statements in the Central Presbyterian. In the Southwest a similar position was taken by the True Witness: "If Southern patronage were withdrawn from Northern publications that abuse it, it would be the most potent and feeling argument that has gone up from the South, ever." True Witness, September 18, 1856.

at any attempt to correct the Northern aberrations:

> It is quite useless, we know, to attempt to contradict the numerous calumnies against the South with which the press, even the religious press, of the North, floods the country. Hence we do not notice one in ten that every week pass under our eyes.[1]

The Northern pulpit was not exempt from criticism, either. To most Southern Presbyterians, ministers in the North were becoming increasingly involved in political matters which led to greater disunity. The editor of the True Witness, published in Mississippi, stated:

> No minister in the South could retain his congregation, if he were in the habit of preaching about every sectional and political question of the day....But how different in the North. The minister, who, like Beecher, plunges into the whirl of political excitement, out and in the pulpit, giving from the sacred desk only homoeopathic doses of the gospel, can draw his thousands....there are, doubtless, many faithful preachers of the gospel who have not desecrated their pulpits. Yet everyone must admit that there is a wide difference North and South in the pulpit. We have yet to hear of the first sermon being preached anywhere in the South on Sectionalism, the Missouri Compromise, or the Nebraska Bill.[2]

Some, however, realized that there were problems both North and South. Typical of this group was the balanced position of James Henley Thornwell: "The prospects of the country fill me with sadness. The future is very dark. The North seems to be mad, and the South blind."[3]

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, September 13, 1856.

[2] True Witness, reprinted in Southern Presbyterian, September 6, 1856. For other statements against the political character of the Northern pulpit see Southern Presbyterian, August 30 and September 27, 1856. See also George D. Armstrong, Politics and the Pulpit, a Discourse Preached in the Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Va., on Thursday, November 27, 1856. (Norfolk, Virginia: J. D. Chiselin, Jr., Bookseller, 1856). Armstrong defended slavery as Biblical, and contended that the preacher should not discuss political matters. "The strife and political agitation of the day--with these the Church, by God's appointment, has nothing to do:--And if she will but follow Heaven's direction, they can never injure her. Her range of operation is higher...." (p. 40).

[3] James Henley Thornwell to George Frederick Holmes, October 9, 1856,

The elections of 1856 were of great concern to the South. The presence of an avowed anti-slavery candidate for the Presidency made many fear for the Union. Charles C. Jones, Jr., son of the noted missionary to slaves, Dr. Charles Colcock Jones, spoke of the election:

> Politics forms the all-absorbing topic at present in our city....The Union, in the event of Fremont's election, will, at least in this section of the state, be decidedly below par. Disunion sentiments are already entertained to a very general extent....It is to be sincerely hoped that every true lover of his country, of the liberties guaranteed under the Constitution, will come to the rescue.[1]

A month later the same correspondent noted the results of the election with satisfaction:

> Since last writing you the people of this country have met and decided an important issue, boldly and broadly presented; and happy am I that we are able to congratulate ourselves upon the results. For at least four

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in Thornwell, Life, p. 405. Thornwell during this period became a strong supporter of the American Party ("Know Nothing Party"), as revealed in a letter written to a friend in Mississippi: "You know that I always was perverse in politics. I was not a Nullifier in South Carolina, and I could not have been a Repudiator in Mississippi. My heresies in these respects might have prepared you for finding me in the ranks of the only organization which, in my judgment, can save the country from impending ruin. There is not a principle of the American party, so far as its principles are known, which does not command my most cordial approbation. Its appearance and success is the most remarkable phenomenon of these remarkable times; and if it fails, our last hope for the Union is gone." James Henley Thornwell to A. H. Pegues, July 26, 1855. Quoted in Thornwell, Life, p. 479. Although noted for its nativist and anti-Catholic stands in some areas, the American Party in the South was predominately unionist in character. See Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought...., p. 323. For another statement of support for the American Party by a Presbyterian see Robert H. Morrison to James Morrison, MS letter, September 9, 1855. R. H. Morrison Papers, University of North Carolina.

[1]Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Rev. C. C. Jones, October 8, 1856. Reprinted in Robert Manson Myers, ed., The Children of Pride. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 247. The original MS is in the Jones Family Papers, University of Georgia.

> years, under the administration-elect, may we hope for peace and prosperity. Beyond that period we scarce dare expect a continuance of our present relations.[1]

A Presbyterian in North Carolina expressed a similar feeling:

> Buchanan is far from my choice but I take consolation in the fact that Fremont a Still worse man was not chosen. The signs of the times are dark and foreboding--Our only hope for the Country is, that God can restrain the wrath of man, and defeat the counsels of the ungodly.[2]

FROM 1857 THROUGH 1859

The opening months of President Buchanan's administration seemed to many Southern Presbyterians to indicate a lessening in sectional tensions. The Southern Presbyterian reprinted a large part of the President's inaugural address, terming it an "admirable document" which "throughout breathes the spirit of true patriotism."[3] The same issue carried the announcement of the Dred Scott decision, which the editor termed "a decision of national importance."[4] The Central Presbyterian said the decision "places a very important question upon a solid basis" and reprinted the entire text of the judicial decision.[5] The same paper also reprinted extensive comments on the case from the Northern papers, and criticised those in the North who found the court decision unfavorable:

> But we have no serious apprehension that the masses in

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[1]Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Rev. and Mrs. C. C. Jones, November 8, 1856. Reprinted in Ibid., p. 261. The original MS is in the Jones Family Papers, Tulane University.

[2]Robert H. Morrison to Rev. James Morrison, MS letter, November 17, 1856. R. H. Morrison Papers, University of North Carolina.

[3]Southern Presbyterian, March 14, 1857.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Central Presbyterian, March 21, 1857.

> the North, will be permanently moved by these disappointed agitators. It has now been decided by the highest judicial as it was before, in effect, by the highest legislative authority in the government, that free-soil principles are unconstitutional. Honest men must now either abandon their principles, or seek to revolutionize the government.[1]

Over a year later the editor declared that sectional feelings were abating:

> Some months ago there were indications of sectional alienation in our country that gave serious alarm to every friend of the Union. The North and South seemed to be estranged almost hopelessly. Misunderstandings and misrepresentations were rife in every direction.... So alarming were the symptoms exhibited that many Christians felt that there was a call on the people of God for special prayer. We doubt not that such prayer was offered in deep earnestness, and we have reason to believe that these prayers are about to be answered. There seems to be on both sides, at least a better feeling, and a better understanding of one another, than there once were, and a disposition to exercise more forbearance than was once manifested, and a clearer perception of truth.[2]

The editor then quoted an extensive portion from a Northern paper which declared that abolitionism was in disfavor in the North, and sectional issues were becoming less prominent as a result.

Such statements did not mean that there was any change in their attitude in regard to the basic issues on the part of Southern Presbyterians. Whenever issues of a sectional nature arose during this period, they consistently defended the Southern position. The Central Presbyterian gave an unfavorable review to The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It, the book by Hinton R. Helper which sought to prove that slavery had impoverished the South.[3]

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[1] Ibid. March 28, 1857. See also the issue of April 11, 1857.

[2] Ibid., August 7, 1858.

[3] Central Presbyterian, July 25, 1857.

A later issue sought to discredit the author of the book by contending he had been guilty of suspicious financial dealings.[1] On a slightly different sectional matter, several Southern Presbyterians were influential in efforts in the South to make Southern education less dependent on the North.[2] More radical was the stance of the Southern Presbyterian, which approved a ban on all textbooks unfavorable to the South.[3]

Serious sectional controversy did not erupt until the closing months of the decade, with the raid of John Brown at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. In common with the rest of the South, Southern Presbyterians expressed shock and deep concern over the matter. Columbus Morrison took note of the raid in his diary:

> The last 3 weeks we have been much excited with the news from Harpers Ferry. On the 17th ult. John Brown made his attempt to excite the Slaves to rebel. He & his party were overpowered & killed or taken prisoners. The plan failed for want of disposition on the part of slaves to join. November 26. 1859. Great excitement at Harpers Ferry. Rumors of attempt to rescue old John Brown now in jail at Charlestown Va. He is condemned to be hung next friday (the 2nd of December). Others of his Party are to be hung on the 16th. It is hoped that none will escape. Philanthropy calls for their blood.
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> December 5. 1859....We learn by despatch that old John Brown was hung last friday at ½ past 11--all quiet. We hope the Abolition excitement will now abate. If not,

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[1] Ibid., August 22, 1857.

[2] Both James Henley Thornwell and Dr. W. H. McGuffy (on the faculty of the University of Virginia) were members of a committee of Southerners which sought to encourage the production of textbooks favorable to the South. A notable example of such a work was The North Carolina Reader, written by Rev. Calvin H. Wiley. See John S. Ezell, "A Southern Education for Southrons," Journal of Southern History, 1951, pp. 303-327. Wiley was a Presbyterian.

[3] Southern Presbyterian, October 10, 1857.

> our Union, will soon dissolve.[1]

A similar disapproval of Brown was expressed by a Presbyterian in North Carolina.

> As you may suppose the Harper's Ferry affair is the subject of conversation in all circles, and today being the time appointed for the execution of Brown we feel more than usually anxious. Of course we all at the South think he ought to be hung & the knowledge that many at the North espouse his cause, so widens the breach that we all fear it will result in a division of the Union and then will come a "Great tribulation."[2]

In Virginia, where excitement about the raid was especially high, the Central Presbyterian sought to answer Northern accusations that the Brown raid had pointed up the great insecurity of the South. The editor further expressed concern about the attitude of the North in urging mercy for Brown:

> In this whole matter, nothing has been more discouraging to us, nothing has given us more pain than the fact that some of the very men in the North, upon whom we relied, and to whom we looked as the instruments by which we trusted Providence would arrest and turn back the tide of fanaticism, in that quarter, by sternly upholding LAW, and its solemn sanctions, are now contending that undeserved Clemency should usurp the throne, and wrest the sword from the hand of righteous judgment....And if the abolition element at the North is so powerful that conservative men seek to conciliate it at such a price, then indeed may the most Union-loving men at the South

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[1]Columbus Morrison, MS diary, entries for November 13, November 26, and December 5, 1859. University of North Carolina.

[2]"M.R.L." to "Susan," MS letter, December 2, 1859. Drury Lacy Papers, Union Theological Seminary. Note also the comment of Charles Colcock Jones: "The Harper's Ferry affair proves to be more serious than at first it appeared to be--not in reference to the Negro population, for that had nothing to do with it; but in reference to the hostility of large numbers of men of all classes in the free states to the slaveholding states, even unto blood....Some of the papers friendly to the South hope that the South will be forbearing and magnanimous!... There is no place left for forbearance--no grounds for compromises ....Such sparks as these, struck to produce a universal conflagration, should be stamped out immediately. Charles Colcock Jones to Charles C. Jones, Jr., November 7, 1859, reprinted in Robert Manson Myers, op. cit., pp. 527-528. The original MS is in the Jones Family Papers, University of Georgia.

> begin to despair as to the possibility of its preservation.[1]

A similar position was taken by Dr. George Howe, professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, in an extended article in the Southern Presbyterian Review. Howe noted that the Brown raid had "moved the hearts of our citizens to their lowest depths, and awakened in many breasts the most anxious fears for the future of our country.[2] In Howe's view, the reaction to the raid was only a symptom of a basic conflict which had been developing in the nation for generations, the cause of which was slavery. Tracing the course of the question in the history of the nation, Howe defended the Southern view of the ethical and constitutional issues involved. He ended on a pessimistic note:

> We have trembled for our country, and still do tremble. Eighty-four years have passed since we asserted our national independence....Whether its lifetime shall extend through its first centennium or not, hangs now in doubt. The conviction here is becoming more and more fixed, that it is better to separate and meet the worst, than to live in perpetual broils....Let good and patriotic men in the North, who have not embarked in political intrigue, come forth from their privacy, assert their rights as citizens at the polls, place conservative men in power, and stay this madness. And let the patriots of the South, trusting in the righteousness of their cause, and looking upward for guidance, without rashness nor impetuous zeal, yet with firm maintenance of their rights, unite in wise counsels, to restore and preserve the safeguards of our National Constitution.[3]

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[1] Central Presbyterian, November 12, 1859. See also the issue of November 19, 1859.

[2] George Howe, "John Brown, and the Progress of Abolition." Southern Presbyterian Review, January, 1860, p. 784.

[3] Ibid., pp. 815, 816.

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

We have indicated that there was an increasing sectionalism on the part of Southern Presbyterians during the decade of the 1850's. There was, however, one important area in which Presbyterians in the South maintained a firm national stance. This was the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Throughout the entire decade Southern involvement in the General Assembly remained at a high level, and Southerners were proud of the fact that their denomination was virtually the only church which had avoided serious dissension over slavery. "Ours is emphatically a united church, whole and harmonious" declared the Southern Presbyterian in 1852.[1] Six years later the True Witness said:

> The conservative and truly national character of our church must have been manifest to every one who attended the meeting of our last General Assembly. ...not a sentiment was advanced, not a word was uttered that had the slightest squinting towards sectionalism. The spirit of true Christian patriotism and earnest philanthropy, seemed to move every heart....No man can stand up against the spirit of nationality in the Old School Presbyterian church.[2]

In the same year a secular paper in New Orleans echoed the same sentiments, declaring that the unity of the Assembly was an example to the nation:

> If the Presbyterian Church maintain its integrity we shall still have some evidence that continued union is possible. If a numerous and powerful body like the Presbyterians can remain united, in the midst of sectional contests, it will show that a political union is not yet absolutely hopeless. If they can banish a disturbing and threatening question from their councils, there is no reason why such question should not be banished from the National

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, June 10, 1852.

[2] True Witness, quoted in Central Presbyterian, June 12, 1858.

councils.[1]

As this quotation indicates, the harmony in the Assembly was maintained only by strict adherence to a policy of silence on the question of slavery. A Southern commissioner to the 1852 General Assembly expressed delight at the unity of the meeting, commenting that there was "not a word" of abolitionism uttered.[2] Two years later the Southern Presbyterian discussed the 1854 General Assembly:

> On no subject, was one part of the church arrayed against another. It was a matter of sincere gratification, that the position of the Church in relation to slavery relieves the Assembly of all necessity for discussing that subject, and seems, indeed, to have extinguished the very desire to agitate it except among a small coterie somewhere in the Northwest....on the subject of slavery our Church is sound, and that however the wild and malignant spirit of abolitionism may rage elsewhere, it is not likely to disturb our spirit or sever the bonds of our union, for many years at least, and through the mercy of God, we hope, never.[3]

The "small coterie" at no point was able to bring the slavery issue before the Assembly for serious discussion. During 1857 there was some indication that a determined effort would be made in the 1857 Assembly. The Presbyterian of the West, printed in Cincinnati, indicated that it would work toward bringing the slavery matter up for review in the Assembly. Southern reaction was predictably hostile. The Central Presbyterian declared that the editor of The Presbyterian of the West was "an agitator only on a very small scale," and predicted his efforts would have little influence.[4] The prediction was correct, for the 1857 Assembly was

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[1] New Orleans Delta, quoted by Southern Presbyterian, May 22, 1858.

[2] R. E. Sherrill, MS diary, p. 23. Montreat.

[3] Southern Presbyterian, June 22, 1854.

[4] Central Presbyterian, February 28, 1857. See also the issue of

calm. The rumors continued for some months, however, and were only stopped by a declaration by The Presbyterian of the West that slavery would not be agitated by them after all.[1] The threat to the harmony of the Church was over.

Thus, although Southern Presbyterians were moving steadily toward a sectional stance in the 1850's, they were able to maintain a national stance within the Church. For them, the Old School Presbyterian Church was the one great exception in a general attitude of suspicion toward the North and its institutions. This duality of attitude, toward the North in general on one hand and the Church on the other hand, was well illustrated by the Central Presbyterian in discussing the establishment of several Presbyterian churches in Boston: "If a large O.S. Presbyterian influence were established in N. England, it would do more to save the Union than a ship load of politicians."[2]

THE COURSE OF THE NEW SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH

In contrast with the Old School in the South, the much smaller group which had become associated with the New School Assembly after the 1837-1838 division found itself under increasing pressure on the question of slavery.[3] Like their Old School

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February 14, 1857, and the Southern Presbyterian, February 7, February 21, and August 8, 1857.

[1]Central Presbyterian, November 28, 1857; Southern Presbyterian, November 28, 1857.

[2]Central Presbyterian, January 1, 1859.

[3]There exists no satisfactory history of the New School in the South. The best treatment is in E. T. Thompson, op. cit.; see especially pp. 414-417 and 650-655. The history of the Southern New School in

brethren, the members of the New School in the South had a strong national outlook; during the controversy about the Compromise of 1850 the only Southern New School publication, the Calvinistic Magazine (Second Series), had urged Presbyterians to speak out against disunion.[1] One of the earliest issues of Presbyterian Witness, started in 1851 as the first New School newspaper in the South, advocated that Christians not allow a day to pass without praying for their country.[2] Under the strain of attacks within the New School Assembly, however, the Southern New School soon adopted a decided sectional stance.

As early as 1846 the New School Assembly had taken action on slavery, and in 1850 a strong statement declared the holding of slaves an offense which should be subjected to church discipline. The lack of a New School paper in the South makes it impossible to judge the precise reaction to this action, but beyond doubt it was resented and ignored.[3]

As early as 1852 the Presbyterian Witness was warning of the evil effects of any further slavery controversy in the Assembly:

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the 1840's is obscure; more is evident during the 1850's, largely through the pages of the Presbyterian Witness.

[1] Calvinistic Magazine (Second Series), July, 1850, pp. 220-222.

[2] Presbyterian Witness, April 11, 1851.

[3] It seems probable that the lack of a Southern New School newspaper was at least in part responsible for the fact that Southerners did not withdraw at this time to form a separate Assembly, since little united action was possible among the scattered elements of the Southern New School. In like manner, it is entirely possible that the threat of further slavery action was responsible for the establishment of the Presbyterian Witness the following year.

> So far as mere human wisdom can discern, if the slavery question is revived, and any more ultra measures adopted than have already been sanctioned by former Assemblies, the most serious and disasterous results will accrue to the whole church. There is manifestly a disposition in the southern section of the church, to remain quiet under existing circumstances; but if /measures are adopted of a radi/cal nature, the submission of the South is at least questionable.[1]

A year later the Assembly adopted a more hostile attitude toward slaveholders in the South by demanding that presbyteries report what action they had taken to implement the Assembly's 1850 action on slavery. The Southerners were enraged, and shortly after the Assembly a group of Southern New School ministers and elders gathered in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, to discuss the matter. The group declared that the Assembly had no right to inquire about the slaveholding of Southern members, and issued a series of resolutions declaring their loyalty to the General Assembly, but also their conviction that slavery was not sinful and that the 1850 Assembly pronouncement was therefore "unconstitutional, and of no binding force."[2]

Several Southern New School judicatories also expressed disapproval of the course of the Assembly. In the Synod of Virginia (New School) a resolution spoke forcefully of the South's determination to fight further agitation:

> Resolved....That said Presbyteries instruct their delegates to the next Assembly, in the event of the subject of slavery being introduced, to propose resolutions expressing in the strongest terms the opinion of the Assembly, that all further agitation of the subject in that body is most unwise and improper, and should not be permitted. And

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[1] Presbyterian Witness, March 26, 1852. The words within the brackets indicate our suggested reconstruction of one line of the text, which is illegible in the copy we have examined due to a tear.

[2] Quoted by Southern Presbyterian, August 5, 1853.

> should the Assembly refuse to sanction such resolutions, that the delegates from said Presbyteries be instructed immediately to withdraw, and unite with those from other portions of the church opposed to the further agitation of this subject in the Assembly, either in a new organization, or in such other measures as in their judgment will be most expedient.[1]

The Synod of Tennessee (New School) also expressed its disapproval of the Assembly actions, but spoke against any movement toward secession:

> Synod regards the slavery resolutions, passed in Buffalo, as wholly unconstitutional, null and void, and to be met, not by secession, nor the threat of it, on the part of the South, but by actually bringing the Assembly to such a position at its next meeting, and in time to come, as will give to the South all the guaranties of peace secured in our Constitution. This can be accomplished not by secession, but by measures within our reach.[2]

Further action on slavery in the Assembly was not forthcoming until 1856, when the issue flared again in the meeting, consuming about four days' debate. The final resolution reaffirmed the 1850 action, in spite of fierce Southern opposition. This led to a new feeling in the South that steps should be taken to form a separate denomination. The New School Synod of Mississippi adopted resolutions which urged contact between the Southern Synods with the view of considering the possibility of forming a separate denomination.[3] In Virginia, the Presbytery of Hanover declared:

> Resolved, unanimously, That this Presbytery...feel that the time has come when the interests of our Church at the South, should the subject be further

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[1]Quoted by ibid., September 8, 1853. It is unclear whether the resolutions were passed officially by the Synod, or by an ad hoc group within the Synod. The original minutes of the Synod apparently have not survived.

[2]Quoted by ibid., November 3, 1853.

[3]See Central Presbyterian, August 23, 1856.

> agitated, require at our hands a course, which, however painful, must result in our separation from the General Assembly. And we request Presbyteries sympathising with us, in case this question is again agitated in the General Assembly, to unite with this Presbytery in the establishment of a Southern Presbyterian Church.[1]

The Synod of Tennessee, on the other hand, deprecated "all devisive measures tending to secession" and expressed the hope that:

> Patience, stability, united co-operation on the part of all our Southern Synods...may be instrumental of great and lasting good both to the church and State, North and South.[2]

As the 1857 New School General Assembly approached, there was much anxiety in the South about the outcome. In Virginia a New School minister wrote:

> Matters both in Church and State seem to be coming to a point. One of the most fearful signs of the times is the diversion of the Northern ministry from the great business of the pulpit. But the Lord reigns, and I trust he will overrule this wretched fanaticism that pervades the Northern mind for his own glory.[3]

On the eve of the Assembly another Southern New School minister likewise expressed his concern:

> I fear to meet the storm impending the approaching meeting of the Assembly--My own feelings are very decided in relation to the folly of any further action on the subject of slavery; & I shall feel constrained to raise my feeble influence against it--Other brethren feel differently; & will push matters to the uttermost--I deprecate division, on some accounts; but will it not give us peace, & render us more efficient at the South?[4]

The prophecy was correct, for the 1857 Assembly was indeed

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[1]Quoted by ibid., October 18, 1856.

[2]Quoted by Southern Presbyterian, October 18, 1856.

[3]A. H. H. Boyd to Abner Leavenworth, MS letter, October 13, 1856, Abner Leavenworth Papers, Duke University.

[4]Isaac Handy to Abner Leavenworth, MS letter, May 18, 1857, Abner Leavenworth Papers, Duke University.

stormy for the Southerners. The leading debater from the South was Dr. Frederick A. Ross, whose extended speech in defense of slavery was later printed and widely circulated.[1] Ross contended that in God's providence slavery would pass away, but that the relationship of master and slave was not sinful. Ross' position was, however, overwhelmingly rejected by the Assembly. The Southern commissioners withdrew from the Assembly, and called for the organization of a separate Church:

> ...the Assembly as at present constituted, instead of being a bond of union between different sections of the church, will continue to be the theatre of strife and discord--and that a separation of the discordant elements is demanded, and the existence of another Assembly in which the agitation of the slavery question will be unknown.[2]

The commissioners further called for a convention of all who agreed with their proposal to meet in Washington, D.C., in late August.

Although the declaration of the Southern commissioners was unofficial, there was little doubt that it would meet with approval in the South. The Presbyterian Witness stated that the action of the Assembly "has virtually led to the formation of a Southern Assembly...."[3] The editor further said:

> That there must be a division of the Presbyterian Church, is now no longer a debatable question--it is a foregone conclusion--a matter already fixed and settled....The discordant sentiments that exist in our Church, are found to be irreconciliable, and cannot longer remain together without producing an explosion.[4]

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[1] F. A. Ross, Slavery Ordained of God, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Company, 1857).

[2] Quoted in Central Presbyterian, June 13, 1857. See also the Presbyterian Witness, June 16, 1857.

[3] Presbyterian Witness, June 16, 1857.

[4] Ibid.

There was some debate over whether or not the new denomination should be sectional. The editor expressed his hope that such would not be the case, although he printed at least one letter favoring a sectional stance.[1] As a practical matter, however, it was certain that the new Church would be sectional.

During the summer months after the Assembly a number of Southern New School presbyteries officially severed their connection with the New School. Typical was the statement of the Presbytery of Clinton, Mississippi:

> 'Therefore, in view of these painful disclosures of heresy and corruption, this Presbytery...renounce the jurisdiction of the said General Assembly, and for conscience sake, in humble obedience to the high and holy behests of our Divine Master, withdraw ourselves from their communion and fellowship, as from a body whom we dare not and cannot, without sin, longer recognize, acknowledge, or obey.[2]

In August 124 delegates representing fifteen presbyteries met in Richmond; the site had been changed from Washington because of hostility on the part of some Washington churches. The convention declared its conviction on the Biblical nature of slavery, and took the stance that matters relating to slavery "do not properly belong to the Church judicatories, as subjects for discussion and inquiry."[3] It then advocated specific steps which would lead to a separate denomination:

> Resolved, that the Convention recommend to all Presbyteries in the Presbyterian Church, which are opposed to the

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[1] Ibid., July 7, 1857.

[2] Quoted in Ibid., July 28, 1857. For other Presbytery actions see Ibid., July 28, 1857 (Kingston Presbytery); August 4, 1857 (Lexington, South, Presbytery); also Central Presbyterian, August 8, 1857 (Holston Presbytery).

[3] Southern Presbyterian, September 5, 1857.

> agitation of slavery in the highest judicatory of the Church, to appoint Delegates in the proportion prescribed by our Form of Government, for the appointment of Commissioners to the Assembly, to meet at Knoxville, Tennessee, on the third Thursday in May, 1858, for the purpose of forming a General Synod, under the name of 'The United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.'[1]

The Assembly met in accordance with the call of the convention, although the meeting actually took place in early April, some weeks before the originally suggested time. Consideration was given to uniting with the Old School Church, but was rejected.[2] The United Synod was therefore set up as a separate body.[3] Its

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[1] Ibid.

[2] For full summaries of the debates in the organizational meeting see Presbyterian Witness, April 7 and April 13, 1858. The material is also duplicated in the Knoxville Register, April 8, 1858. Southern Old School papers took careful note of the course of the Southern New School, as will have been obvious from previous footnote citations. Considerable debate was generated in the Old School about reunion, and in some isolated instances (especially in Tennessee) some churches chose to unite with an Old School presbytery. (See Central Presbyterian, August 29, 1857). One Virginia Old School Presbytery declared that it would welcome reunion with the New School presbytery in its area; the invitation was not accepted. (See Minutes of the Presbytery of Montgomery, MS, August, 1857, Vol. 2, pp. 85-87). The reasons why the Southern New School remained a separate group were varied. Some Old School men still had lingering suspicions about the orthodoxy of the New School. The Presbyterian Witness gave ten reasons why a reunion was not feasible; included were doctrinal differences, differences in "temper," and the danger of slavery agitation in the Old School. "We have just escaped one cauldron of abolitionism; and we do not wish, while the blisters are yet unhealed upon us, to plunge into another, which promises to be still more fearful." Presbyterian Witness, March 16, 1858. For major discussions on the possibility of reunion see Central Presbyterian, July 11, July 18, July 25, August 1, August 8, August 29, and October 31, 1857; Presbyterian Witness, November 3 and December 22, 1857.

[3] Not all in the Southern New School joined the United Synod. The New School Church in Kingsport, Tennessee, divided over the issue, with one group retaining their association with the New School, although expressing disapproval of the Assembly's actions on slavery. (Presbyterian Witness, March 16, 1858). Several ministers in the Presbytery of Holston retained their connection with the New School, and one left the South "feeling that nothing had been done...to

first statistical report indicated there were 10,205 members and 167 churches, served by 96 ministers.[1] The church was confined geographically to the South, with four synods (Virginia, Tennessee, West Tennessee, and Mississippi); the Synod of Tennessee was the largest, with almost 6000 members.

In spite of the fact that the United Synod was confined to the South, it made some attempt to avoid a strictly sectional stance. The Presbyterian Witness declared:

> The United Synod will not be ultra Southern--it will occupy precisely the ground of Christ and the Apostles on the subject of slavery....[2]

The paper also spoke in praise of "the worth of our undivided republic" on the Fourth of July.[3] Nevertheless, the United Synod for practical purposes represented the final result of a sectional stance.[4]

The end of the decade of the 1850's, therefore, found Southern Presbyterians affirming a strong sectional position. Among those in the Old School, Southern Presbyterians maintained a national stance in relation to their General Assembly. On the part of many in the Old School, however, a decided sectional stance in regard to political matters had become prevalent, although some Unionist sentiment was still apparent. Within the New School sectional feeling had

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justify a rupture." Presbyterian Witness, April 7, 1858. It would thus seem that some anti-slavery sentiment was still present in the East Tennessee area.

[1] Presbyterian Witness, June 22, 1858.

[2] Presbyterian Witness, March 9, 1858.

[3] Ibid., July 13, 1858.

[4] During its brief existence the United Synod remained fairly static. It was received into the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in 1864.

resulted in the formation of a regional General Assembly, although this did not necessarily imply a completely anti-Unionist stance politically.

In the two years following 1859 this would change, and the transtition on sectionalism would be complete among all Southern Presbyterians. On the last day of the decade the editor of the Central Presbyterian spoke of the future with pessimism:

> There are events of this year, to which we need only allude, that may be "the letting out of waters," the end of which no man can foresee. The coming year, with its Presidential election, will be, in all human probability, an eventful year in our history, and one which may be an epochal year. That it may not be an epoch of sorrow and loss, it becomes every one to seek for that wisdom from above...May the retrospect of 1860 be brighter and better than that of 1859.[1]

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[1]Central Presbyterian, December 31, 1859.

PART III. THE LATER PERIOD

CHAPTER III. THE FINAL CRISIS: 1860-1861

Introduction

The Opening Months of 1860

The Election of Lincoln and the Secession Crisis

Southern Presbyterians and Ecclesiastical Sectionalism

CHAPTER THREE

THE FINAL CRISIS: 1860-1861

The final stage in the transition of Southern Presbyterian sentiment on sectionalism occurred during the years 1860 and 1861, as civil war broke out between the North and South. Even after the secession of the Southern states there was some hope that the Church would be able to avoid a geographical division, but such was not to be the case. With the disruption of the Presbyterian Church and the formation of a separate Southern Assembly the completely sectional character of Southern Presbyterians was irrevocably determined. In this chapter we shall trace the steps by which this transition was effected. Our primary concern will not be with the history of the formation of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, as this has been done by previous writers.[1] We shall, instead, seek to investigate the developing attitude of Southern Presbyterians toward sectionalism during the period.

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[1] Note especially E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 551-571, and William J. Wade, "The Origins and Establishment of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1959, pp. 17-202. The latter work includes material on the Southern Presbyterian reaction to the election of Lincoln and the secession crisis, drawn mainly from newspaper sources, and includes surveys of Border State and Northern reaction. The present study is intended to supplement such studies, concentrating especially on information from letters and diaries, and seeking to demonstrate the final stages of the transition toward sectional thinking we have noted earlier.

THE OPENING MONTHS OF 1860

Southern Presbyterian anxiety about the future of the Union did not abate during the opening months of 1860. In Virginia, Dr. Francis McFarland urged his people to pray for the leadership of the Nation:

> Our Country was never perhaps in more peril than at this time. Wise & good men are becoming alarmed. The speech of Mr. Breckinridge, Vice Pres. of the U.S. before the Legislature of Ky. makes this manifest. And the House of Representatives in Congress has now, for nearly six weeks, remained unorganized, being unable to elect a Speaker, from dissentions in party politics. An/d7 They are divided mainly on a question that is deemed of fundamental importance.
>
> The friends of the Union have a majority if they would unite, but they will not. While the other party are as one man; & are usually within 3 or 4 votes of accomplishing their object. I consider the questions that separate Whigs & Democrats & Americans as of no importance, compared with our Union. A very small matter now might kindle a flame that would result in the separation of this Union & in evils that no human arithmetic can calculate.
>
> I wish to have nothing to do, as a minister, with party politics, & I introduce these things now only to shew the pressing necessity of praying for our rulers--"for all in Authority."
>
> If our Rulers are left to their own wisdom, I despair of the Republic.[1]

Several months later McFarland received a letter from a fellow Virginia minister expressing hope that tensions were easing:

> Like you I have felt much concern for our country and at one time greatly feared that we would be driven into division through the influence of bad men. I trust however that the Lord will interpose as he has done in former days and save us from such men & their wicked counsels.[2]

During the opening phases of the Presidential election Southern Presbyterian papers maintained silence on the matter, al-

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[1] Francis McFarland, MS sermon, January 15, 1860. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2] James Morrison to Francis McFarland, MS letter, March 8, 1860. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

though the Southern Presbyterian spoke in glowing terms of the annual meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly as "proving that Old School Presbyterians are yet one people....Our church forms one of the few remaining ligaments which still bind us together as one people...."[1] As the election approached, however, apprehension grew. The Presbytery of Fayetteville, in light of "the present agitated state of our beloved country, & the dangers which seem to hang portentiously over it," requested the Synod of North Carolina to declare a day of fasting "that God would forgive all our sins, as a nation, heal our breaches, & perpetuate our civil & religious privileges, & continue us, that happy, united, & prosperous people, whose God is the Lord."[2] In Georgia, Charles C. Jones, Jr., who by this time was mayor of Savannah, declared to his father:

> The doubt which attends any attempt to conjecture what another month may bring forth in the political and social status of our country exerts in all probability its depressing influence. The election of Lincoln seems almost a fixed fact....Should Lincoln be elected, the action of a single state, such as South Carolina or Alabama, may precipitate us into all the terrors of intestine war.[3]

A Presbyterian in Columbia, South Carolina, wrote that "The people here are very much excited about the election, all for disunion if Lincoln is elected."[4] In Florida another Presbyterian recounted his minister's statements concerning the election:

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, May 26, 1860.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Fayetteville, MS, October, 1860, Vol. 8, p. 130.

[3] Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Rev. C. C. Jones, October 18, 1860. Reprinted in Robert Manson Myers, op. cit., p. 621. The original MS is in the Jones Family Papers, University of Georgia.

[4] Jno. A. Woodburn to Calvin Wiley, MS letter, October 13, 1860. Calvin Wiley Papers, University of North Carolina.

> Mr. Milliken preached...One of the best sermons that I have heard him preach--and his remarks preceeding the morning prayer were very appropriate indeed in reference to the Presidential election which will take place on next Tuesday--the 6th inst--He read a number of texts from both the Old & New Testaments showing us our duty & the burden of the prayer was that we as a Nation might humble ourselves before God that He would have mercy upon us. that he would not deal with us as we deserved but according to the riches of his grace That God would still spare us as a great and united people whose God is the Lord--I for one readily assented to every sentiment that was uttered, and with all my heart responded, Amen.[1]

THE ELECTION OF LINCOLN AND THE SECESSION CRISIS

The news of the election of Abraham Lincoln was met with deep anxiety by Southern Presbyterians, many of whom felt it was certain to bring about disunion. In Georgia, Columbus Morrison noted the election in his diary:

> The Telegraph hard at work--The news give a large majority for Abe Lincoln, Abolitionist. Our town is much excited. Secession & War. All business is still.... Groups are collected in solemn earnest what are we to do.[2]

Several weeks later Morrison indicated his disfavor of the Southern reaction to Lincoln's election:

> The war meetings are daily. Panic & Revolution & Repudiation with their host of evils increase. Taxation to prepare for & sustain the war will soon be upon us. All this without cause. I will not submit to it. The proof is clear that Lincoln is not an Abolitionist and even if he was he could not hurt us, for a majority in Congress is against such doctrine & would control him. No! It is the work of Fanatics south. The dreams of a Cotton Republic, Revenge upon a few Abolitionists North who by voting for him controlled the balance in his favor. I hate Abolitionists, but would not bring bloodshed and ruin upon good citizens that they might be made to suffer.[3]

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[1] John Davidson, typescript of MS diary, November 4, 1860. Montreat.

[2] Columbus Morrison, MS diary, November 7, 1860. University of North Carolina.

[3] Ibid., November 20, 1860.

Another Presbyterian in Georgia also noted the excitement about the election:

> We have just heard a rumor that Lincoln is elected. It has been expected; but hopes have been entertained that it would not be. The most calm & conservative men in this State are desponding. Lying between Alabama & S.C. the feeling is very strong that it must go with them. A few days will determine the matter. I look for serious trouble & greatly fear that the South by precipitate action may place itself in a false position. The Lord reigneth how rich a consolation.[1]

In North Carolina another Presbyterian wrote of the tension caused by Lincoln's election:

> There is some excitement since Lincolns election. There is a strict Patrol and the poor negroes are beginning to experience the effect of the sympathy of their white brethren at the North.[2]

A Virginia minister saw the judgment of God manifested in the results of the election:

> Your favor was duly received--it certainly looks quite enough on the dark side of things. Why, my dear Sir, the Lord reigns. Breckinridge, Bell, Douglas & Lincoln are mere circumstances. God can turn the hearts of men as the rivers of water are turned. The wickedness of the people has been great & the nation needs to be sifted.... The whole land is filled with that covetousness which is idolatry. The time of trial has come I know it & feel it. But I say let it come. If men can learn wisdom at the sacrifice of property, the lesson will not be bought too dearly....A storm of the wildest character is about to rage all over this country....[3]

The attitude of others in Virginia, however, was less open to the

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[1]Joseph Brown to unidentified correspondent, November 9, 1860. Reprinted in Margaret Burr DesChamps, ed., "A Missionary's Letters from South Georgia in 1860," Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, Vol. 38, p. 88.

[2]William C. Bullock to "Walter," MS letter, November 22, 1860. Bullock Family Papers, Duke University.

[3]John S. Grasty to William C. Grasty, MS letter, December 7, 1860. Grasty Papers, Duke University. It is interesting in light of his remarks to note that John Grasty (a pastor in Fincastle, Virginia) was the owner of a fairly large number of slaves, who were hired out to various individuals.

idea of war, as was clear as the secession debates deepened.

The strongest reaction to the election of Lincoln was in South Carolina, where action was taken almost immediately to secede from the Union. A South Carolina layman, Thomas Law, found the election results alarming:

> By telegraphic news we were rendered quite sure today that Lincoln, the Black Republican candidate, has been elected Prest. My feelings were considerably wrought upon by such tidings. And great political excitement seems to prevail in this community.[1]

More pointed was the view of the Southern Presbyterian, which had recently come under the editorship of Abner Porter, who was to prove a fierce proponent of Southern Presbyterian sectionalism in the period:

> The last lingering hope cherished in any patriotic bosom, that the Black Republican candidate for the Presidency would not be elected, has expired. The deed is done. As it was enacting, as the process of election went on, and as the telegraphic wires were announcing the result, the South assumed the attitude of calm expectation, awaiting the consummation of the fell purpose of her avowed enemies ....One thing appears to us clear and certain, namely, that the South cannot continue to endure the perturbations and harassments of the past....They will prefer the hazard of any convulsion, the perils of any terrible adventure, to a life of perpetual anxiety and disquiet.[2]

A week later Porter spoke more directly of the choice facing the South:

> The present aspect of our affairs is, indeed, alarming. We cannot contemplate the dissolution of the Union without emotions of profound sadness. And the possible consequences of disunion are such as to awaken the most serious apprehensions. On the other hand, the ascendancy and rule of the Black Republican party must be attended with results fatal to the interests of the South. Either submission or secession, on the part of the slave States,

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[1]Thomas C. Law, MS diary, entry for November 7, 1860. Thomas Law Papers, University of South Carolina.

[2]Southern Presbyterian, November 9, 1860.

> is beset with most formidable dangers. The solemn hour has come, when the people have no choice but to select between the hazards of two fearful paths.[1]

For most Presbyterians in the lower South the decision, although difficult, was in favor of secession. That this was to be the case became clear on November 21, 1860, which had been set aside by the governor of South Carolina as a day of humiliation and prayer. All over the State Presbyterian ministers took the occasion to speak of the crisis facing the South, and many came out openly for secession. In Charleston, the pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church, William Dana, declared his position:

> ...the party that, by its majorities in the Northern States, succeeds now to power has drawn its life and breath and being from the principle of hostility to the vital interests of the South; hostility to those institutions which the Word of God recognizes and regulates, and which his Providence has here made a necessity--institutions which, directly or indirectly, involve the welfare of every class and individual in this State, and without which it would be given over to famine and desolation....The South alone should govern the South.[2]

Another Charleston pastor, the noted Dr. Thomas Smyth, probed more deeply into the causes of the crisis. To Smyth, the problem was deeper than the immediate political causes that were so evident. The basic cause was philosophical in character:

> Now, to me, pondering long and profoundly upon the course of events, the evil and bitter root of all our evils is to be found in the infidel, atheistic, French Revolution, Red Republican principle, embodied as an axiomatic seminal principle--not in the Constitution, but in the Declaration of Independence....All men are not born equal, in bodily constitution, size, sex, or capacity; nor in mental facilities and endowments; nor in emotional susceptibilities; nor in moral tastes and judgments; nor in social

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[1] Ibid., November 17, 1860.

[2] William C. Dana, A Sermon Delivered in the Central Presbyterian Church, Charleston, South Carolina, November 21, 1860 (Charleston: Evans and Cogswell, 1860), pp. 7, 8.

position; nor in their relations to law and government.[1]

With this premise, Smyth then sought to show how this had led eventually to the present crisis:

> First, it led to universal suffrage....As a natural consequence, it followed that majorities should absolutely govern, and should interpret and govern even the Constitution....Another consequence of this seminal principle was the interpretation of the Bible according to the majority--that is, according to the popular opinion....And what, we ask, could finally be the result of this higher law--that is, this majority and equality-principle--but anarchy, prodigality, profanity, Sabbath profanation, vice and ungodliness in every monstrous form, and in the end the corruption and overthrow of the Republic, and the erection, upon its ruins, of an absolute and bloody despotism, of which coercion, or in other words, force, is the vital principle. An anti-slavery Bible must have an anti-slavery God, and then a God anti-law, order, property and morality; that is no God but "THE GOD OF THIS WORLD."[2]

Smyth then concluded his sermon with a veiled but unmistakable assertion that secession would be the proper course for the State.

In Columbia, South Carolina, Dr. James Henley Thornwell spoke feelingly of his view of the crisis:

> During the twenty-five years in which I have fulfilled my course as a preacher--all of which have been spent in my native State, and nearly all in this city--I have never introduced secular politics into the instructions of the pulpit. It has been a point of conscience with me to know no party in the State.[3]

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[1] Thomas Smyth, The Sin and the Curse; or, The Union, the True Source of Disunion, and our Duty in the Present Crisis. A Discourse Preached on the Occasion of the Day of Humiliation and Prayer Appointed by the Governor of South Carolina, on November 21st, 1860, in the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S.C. (Charleston: Evans & Cogswell, 1860). Reprinted in Smyth, Works, Vol. 7, pp. 545-546.

[2] Ibid., pp. 546-547.

[3] James Henley Thornwell, National Sins. A Fast-Day Sermon: Preached in the Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S. C., Wednesday, November 21, 1860. (Columbia, S. C.: Southern Guardian Steam-Power Press, 1860), p. 4. The sermon is also reprinted in Thornwell, Works, Vol. 4, pp. 510-548.

Nevertheless, he said, the crisis demanded that the pulpit speak clearly of the moral issues involved, even at the risk of impinging upon political matters. For Thornwell, the basic problem was that the nation had sinned against God. Furthermore, this sin was not just the collective sins of the individuals in the nation; it was the sin of the government of the nation. If the powers that be are ordained of God, Thornwell argued, then those same powers are morally responsible to God and subject to His judgment. "But if the State is a moral institute, responsible to God, and existing for moral and spiritual ends, it is certainly a subject capable of sin. It may endure, too, the penalty of sin...."[1] What, then, were the sins of which the nation was guilty? Thornwell declared that the first sin was the fact that the Federal Constitution, "a compact among sovereigns," had been broken. He then set out to demonstrate, by a tightly-knit legal argument, the precise nature of this action:

> It is obvious that the ultimate ground of the authority of federal legislation is the consent of the confederating States. The laws of Congress bind me, only because South Carolina has consented that I should be bound....If this view of the subject be correct, the Federal Government is preeminently a government, whose very existence depends upon a scrupulous adherence to good faith.... The moment faith is broken, the Union is dissolved.... There is one subject, however, in relation to which the non-slaveholding States have not only broken faith, but have justified their course upon the plea of conscience. We allude to the subject of slavery. They have been reluctant to open the Territories to the introduction of slaves, and have refused to restore fugitives to their masters, and have vindicated themselves from blame by appealing to a higher law than the compacts of men.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 14.

[2] Ibid., pp. 20, 21, 24.

However, since the Constitution had been, in effect, abrogated by the North by the refusal to obey the Constitutional guarantees about slavery, the non-slaveholding States "are bound in honor to take back their pledges, to withdraw from the Union, and to release their confederates from all the conditions of the contract."[1]

The nation was guilty of other sins as well, not the least of which was its failure to adhere to the representative form of government outlined in the Constitution. Thornwell admitted as well that South Carolina had also sinned against God, although significantly the sins he enumerated tended to be individual rather than corporate in nature.[2] He did not speak directly of the advisability of secession for the State, but his closing remarks indicated that he felt secession was the inevitable result of the North's actions:

> Finally, let us pray that our courage may be equal to every emergency. Even though our cause be just, and our course approved of Heaven, our path to victory may be through a baptism of blood....Our State may suffer grevious-ly; she may suffer long: Be it so: we shall love her the more tenderly and the more intensely, the more bitterly she suffers....Let right and duty be our watchword; liberty, regulated by law, our goal; and, leaning upon the arm of everlasting strength, we shall achieve a name, whether we succeed or fall, that posterity will not

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[1] Ibid., P. 24.

[2] It is of interest that among the sins he listed was the failure to perform the duties owed by slaveholders to their slaves: "Is our legislation in all respects in harmony with the idea of slavery? Are our laws such that we can heartily approve them in the presence of God? Have we sufficiently protected the person of the slave? Are our provisions adequate for giving him a fair and impartial trial when prosecuted for offences? Do we guard as we should his family relations?...We have been provoked by bitter and furious assailants to deal harshly with them, and it becomes us this day to review our history, and the history of our legislation, in the light of God's truth, and to abandon, with ingenous sincerity, whatever our consciences cannot sanction." Ibid., pp. 37-38. It should be recalled that Columbia was the State capital; many legislators would probably have been in the congregation on this day.

willingly let die.[1]

We have examined Thornwell's sermon at some length because it is an important expression of the Southern Presbyterian rationale for the right of secession at this time. Thornwell, it will be recalled, had taken a consistently Unionist stance before this. However, for him the election of Lincoln marked a new stage in the history of the Union. In Thornwell's mind, there were grave moral issues involved in the secession crisis, and the decision of Presbyterians in regard to secession should be determined in light of these moral factors. If the premises of Thornwell were granted, the conclusions logically followed.[2]

The secessionist position taken by various preachers in

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[1] Ibid., p. 42.

[2] The most famous secession sermon by a Southern Presbyterian was preached a few days later, November 29, by Dr. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans. Palmer, it should be noted, was a native of South Carolina and a close friend of Thornwell. In it Palmer declared that the trust specifically assigned by God to the South was "to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing." B. M. Palmer, The South: Her Peril, and her Duty. A Discourse, Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, on Thursday, November 29, 1860. (New Orleans: Office of the True Witness, 1860), p. 4. The sermon was widely circulated throughout the nation. The sermon has been analyzed in detail by various writers. See, for example, Haskell Monroe, "Bishop Palmer's Thanksgiving Day Address," Louisiana History, Vol. 4, pp. 105-118; Margaret Burr DesChamps, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Orator-Preacher of the Confederacy," Southern Speech Journal, Vol. 19, pp. 14-22; E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 556-558; Doralyn J. Hickey, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: Churchman of the Old South," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1862, pp. 186-191; Wayne Eubank, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer: A Southern Divine." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1943, pp. 118-127. The text of the Thanksgiving Day sermon is also given in Thomas Cary Johnson, The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906), pp. 206-219.

South Carolina received official sanction at the meeting of the Synod of South Carolina on December 1, 1860:

> With respect to the political duties of our Churches, as composed of citizens of this Commonwealth, the Synod of South Carolina is not called upon, as a Synod, even in the present extremity, to give advice or instructions ....But there is now a great and solemn question before the people of this State affecting its very life and being; and that question has of course its religious aspects and relations, upon which this body is perfectly competent to speak....The Synod has no hesitation, therefore, in expressing the belief that the people of South Carolina are now solemnly called on to imitate their revolutionary forefathers, and stand up for their rights. We have a humble, abiding confidence that the God, whose truth we represent in this conflict, will be with us....[1]

Shortly after this, on December 20, the State of South Carolina passed an ordinance of secession. The first person to sign the articles of secession was T. C. Perrin, a Presbyterian elder.[2] Thomas Law wrote in his diary, "This is a day to be memorable in the history of So. Ca."[3] Several days later he noted, "We recd. today the authentic account of the Secession. I was much excited in hearing it."[4] James Henley Thornwell wrote a fellow minister:

> Our affairs of State look threatening; but I believe that we have done right. I do not see any other course that was left to us. I am heart and hand with the State in her move.[5]

A fuller explanation of the decision to adopt a completely sectional stance was given by Thomas Smyth:

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, MS, November-December, 1860. Vol. 3, pp. 82-83. The Southern Presbyterian, in its issue of December 1, 1860, had come out in favor of Southern independence.

[2] La Motte, op. cit., p. 126.

[3] Thomas Law, MS diary, entry for December 20, 1860. Thomas Law Papers, University of South Carolina.

[4] Ibid., entry for December 24, 1860.

[5] James Henley Thornwell to Rev. Douglas, December 31, 1860. Reprinted in Thornwell, Life, p. 486.

> As a Union & a Union-loving man I was driven from point to point until as the last human hope of its yet possible preservation, I concurred in our secession of the power to accomplish which I have no doubt & of whose propriety I was now against my will convinced.[1]

The position of Presbyterians in South Carolina was generally approved by Presbyterians in the South Atlantic States. The most favorable reaction was from Georgia; the following quotation from the wife of Charles Colcock Jones indicates the mixed feelings held by some:

> An indescribable sadness weighs down my soul as I think of our once glorious but now dissolving Union! ...We have no alternative; and necessity demands that we protect ourselves from entire destruction at the hands of those who have rent and torn and obliterated every national bond of union, of confidence and affection.[2]

A similar insight into Presbyterian feelings was given by John Davidson, clerk of the session of the Church in Quincy, Florida:

> I have been all my life as much in favor of union as any reasonable man could be for I feel deeply impressed with the belief that if these United States should be severed and rent asunder--our prosperity and happiness as a great nation would be at an end and thus it was that I took more interest in the late political convass than I ever did before--using my influence for the Union ticket, Bell and Everett--....After the election of Mr. Lincoln I lost all hope that we as a Southern people could have justice from the Federal Government and that our only resource would be to secede as a Southern Confederacy however injurious it might be in the main--Our reasonable rights have been time and again disregarded

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[1] Thomas Smyth to Dr. Magee, MS letter, December 24, 1860. Thomas Smyth Letterbook, Montreat.

[2] Mrs. Mary Jones to C. C. Jones, Jr., January 3, 1861. Reprinted in Robert Manson Myers, op. cit., p. 641; original MS in Jones Family Papers, University of Georgia. For another statement from Georgia see Joseph R. Wilson, Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible. A Discourse Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Georgia, on Sabbath Morning, Jan. 6, 1861. (Augusta: Steam Press of Chronicle & Sentinel, 1861). The sermon is a defense of slavery; while not speaking directly to the secession issue, Wilson strongly defended the right of the South to have its own institutions, implying that any denial of this was a sin against God.

> by the North until we are I think compelled to resist or submit ignominiously almost to servitude--[1]

Outside the lower Atlantic States, however, there was much less approval of the movement toward secession. Some members of Benjamin Morgan Palmer's congregation in New Orleans withdrew after his Thanksgiving Day sermon.[2] In Mississippi, James A. Lyon, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Columbus, preached against disunion, although agreeing that the North should cease interference in Southern affairs. He declared that "It is a fallacy to call cotton king. Cotton is king only with a few hundred proud, haughty princely manufacturers, for whom the masses of the people have no love...."[3] He came under strong criticism by an anonymous writer in the local newspaper, but stated:

> I have reason to believe that the sermon has done and is doing great good in preparing the minds of the people for another question that is not very far ahead I hope--that of Re-Union.[4]

The strongest opposition by Presbyterians to secession was in the North Carolina-Virginia area. One of the sharpest criticisms of the Southern position was that expressed in his diary by Simeon Colton, pastor in Asheboro, North Carolina:

> I have but a short time to live and the state of the country is of little consequence to me compared with the care of my own soul for eternity. I cannot however but feel deeply concerned about the condition of

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[1] John Davidson, typescript copy of diary, entry for January 3, 1861. Montreat.

[2] Thomas Cary Johnson, Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, p. 223.

[3] James A. Lyon, Fast Day Sermon, quoted by William Wade, op. cit., p. 48.

[4] James A. Lyon, typescript copy of diary, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. The date of the entry is uncertain, since the previous pages are missing; it is, however, in early 1861.

> public affairs. God has taken us in hand and he seems determined to sift us to the very dregs....One great purpose that God has in view, I apprehend is the moderation, or the destruction of negro slavery.[1]

Shortly after the fall of Ft. Sumter Colton spoke more pointedly about the secession crisis:

> I look upon this whole matter as an act of naked rebellion. In the first place the act of secession was altogether wrong. This in fact has been acknowledged by the Secessionists, for in their new constitution they have provided for secession, which amounts to a declaration that under the old it was not admitted--The South Carolinians fired the first hostile guns--first on the U. States flag--also the first gun was fired by them on fort Sumpter. The war has been provoked by the South and I fear will be a source of incalculable injury to them. What the grand designs of Providence is in permitting this state of things I cannot tell--the first reason may be a punishment for our Sins,...God may have a design in connection with Slavery, to let the South know that while their purpose is to perpetuate, his is to liberate, and render the system worthless. God grant that the whole movement may turn out for good, but there is a prospect of distressing times.[2]

Eli W. Caruthers, pastor of a Church near Greensboro, also held a strong Unionist position, and there is some indication his views were responsible for his resignation in mid-1861.[3] The editorial stance of the North Carolina Presbyterian, first published in 1858, was less firm, but the editor expressed the opinion that civil war could be averted if Christians would work for reconciliation:

> We are no alarmists; but we hesitate not to express the candid conviction that nothing but the Christianity of the country can keep us from civil war. Politicians cannot do it....The feeling of national brotherhood cannot do it....But the Christianity of the country can prevent civil war. Its mission is that of peace, harmony and love. It restrains the passion and removes prejudice ....It is time, therefore that Christians were realizing

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[1] Simeon Colton, MS diary, entry for January 27, 1861. University of North Carolina.

[2] Ibid., entry for April 20, 1861.

[3] George Troxler, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

> the responsibility that rests upon them, and were bringing their forces to bear upon the combatants. Will they not, north and south, bestir themselves, and at once let their voice be heard for peace![1]

The sentiment against secession was more general in Virginia. A prominent minister in Lexington, Dr. William S. White, spoke later of his opposition to secession in the early months of 1861:

> Virginia had not withdrawn from the Union, and an immense majority of her people were strongly opposed to this measure as the wisest and best means of seeking redress for the wrongs the whole South suffered at the hands of the North. With this feeling I sympathized with all my heart. I deprecated what then seemed to me like 'burning the barn to kill the rats.'[2]

White also expressed disapproval of the Thanksgiving Day sermon of Benjamin Morgan Palmer: "Dr. Palmer can hardly be so simple as really to desire the breaking up of this great confederacy."[3] A letter written near the end of the War indicated that White had spoken at a Union meeting as late as April 15, 1861.[4] A United Synod minister, Isaac Naff, declared to his congregation that war was coming, but that both North and South were responsible. He stated that God was judging the nation for its sins, one of which was sectionalism:

> ...but another cause is unjustified sectionalism. There is not enough of that noble patriotism which knows no North, no South, no East, no West. We are apt to cast

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[1] North Carolina Presbyterian, January 5, 1861. For a summary of a sermon in North Carolina which tended to justify secession see the North Carolina Presbyterian, January 12, 1861; the sermon was by Rev. Neill McKay.

[2] H. M. White, ed., Rev. William S. White, D.D., and His Times. An Autobiography. (Richmond, Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1891), p. 168.

[3] W. S. White to John S. Watt, December 13, 1860, reprinted in Ibid., p. 169.

[4] W. S. White to William Brown, March 2, 1865, reprinted in Ibid., pp. 170-171.

> all blame on our neighbors & thereby endeavor to shift responsibility. But a time like this demands candor. It is not a time for recrimination but Self abasement. The great cause then which is the legitimate off spring of those already mentioned is the fanaticism of the North & the arrogance of the South.[1]

In his autobiography written some years later, Naff said that he had opposed secession, and had felt that the South would not win a war against the North.[2]

Similar expressions of opposition to secession came from others in Virginia. The aged Henry Ruffner wrote his son about feeling in western Virginia:

> As to political affairs--they are awfully bad. The secession mania is spreading in the South. East Virginia is deeply infected with it, but west Virginia will not secede from the Union--though she may from East Virginia. We have a few E. Virg. lawyers in Charleston, and here and there a few other individuals who are for secession, but if the question be put to the vote, not one in a hundred would be seceders in this part of the State.[3]

George Junkin, Ruffner's successor as president of Washington College, was an avowed unionist:

> As to the "madness of secession"...I agree with all you say. Dr. Palmer's sermon is a terrible thing--to come from an American minister. It is the most revolutionary & bloodletting thing I have seen. It is somewhat alarming

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[1] Isaac Naff, MS sermon, January 4, 1861. Isaac Naff Papers, Montreat. The format of the MS indicates that it was not a full text for the sermon, but a full outline.

[2] "In sentiment I was opposed to secession from the beginning, because, I thought, I foresaw that it would prove to be a disastrous struggle to the Southern States. In this I differed with most of my brethren in the ministry, & consequently deferred to their better judgment. Hence I remained a quiet supporter of the "lost cause" to the last, though I was unable to divest myself of the feeling that we must in the end be overpowered by the greater numbers & the better facilities of our adversaries. Our people failed to seek separation from the Northern yoke from right motives." Isaac Naff, MS autobiography, no date. Isaac Naff Papers, Montreat.

[3] Henry Ruffner to William Henry Ruffner, MS letter, January 9, 1861. Ruffner Family Papers, Montreat.

that it has been published & sent all abroad.[1]

Later Junkin resigned his position and returned to the North.[2] Robert Lewis Dabney spoke frequently of his anti-secessionist views:

> I feel sick at heart at the state of the country. I have been attempting, in my feeble way, to preach peace, and to rouse Christians to their duty in staying the tide of passion and violence....As for South Carolina, the little impudent vixen has gone beyond all patience. She is as great a pest as the Abolitionists. And if I could have my way, they might whip her to her heart's content, so they would only do it by sea, and not pester us.[3]

A few weeks later Dabney authored "A Pacific Appeal to Christians: An Address to the Clergy and Laity of the Christian Churches of the Country." In it he declared that "All Southern Christians would deplore an unnecessary rupture of the Federal Union" and urged Christians to work for reconciliation. The work was signed by a number of leading clergymen in Virginia, including every professor at Union Seminary and virtually all leading Presbyterian ministers.[4] A unionist stance was consistently taken by the Central Presbyterian:

> If this Union can be preserved, or if broken, restored with the intent and spirit under which our fathers made it, none but a dark-hearted traitor would try to count its price....let us not sink down in despair, while there is the least footing where hope may stand.[5]

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[1]George Junkin to Francis McFarland, MS letter, January 26, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2]See Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South, pp. 242-243. For a contemporary statement see W.S. White to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 9, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[3]Robert Lewis Dabney to Mrs. Elizabeth Dabney, December 28, 1860, reprinted in T. C. Johnson, Life of Dabney, pp. 214-225.

[4]Reprinted in Ibid., pp. 215-218.

[5]Central Presbyterian, January 5, 1861.

To some, the events were a source of wonderment. William Henry Foote declared:

> What strange events are around us! Is this nation to be divided in one day--about the question where a few Negroes are to live?--& what better will Negro be after we are divided?[1]

Feelings, however, were moving increasingly toward a secessionist position. The final abandonment of a unionist position occurred as a result of two events which occurred a few days apart in April, 1861. The first was the beginning of hostilities with the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12; the second was Lincoln's call on April 15 for 75,000 volunteers to put down the "insurrection." In common with others in the South who had taken a unionist stance, Southern Presbyterians almost immediately rallied behind South Carolina. Typical was the comment of the Central Presbyterian.

> Within the last ten days the sun of our country's hope moved far downward, hanging low--and lower--barely yet in the heavens. It has now gone down in gloom--how deep, and how long, "O Lord God, thou knowest." We are henceforth a divided nation. We do not now search for the causes, or the place of blame. The stupendous fact is before us....We are a separated people. The answer of the President at Washington to our Commissioners, and his proclamation calling for an armed force of 75,000 men to "execute the laws," that is to subjugate the seven seceding States, is an end of the matter. Separation is unavoidable.[2]

The change in sentiment was echoed in innumerable letters and diaries. From North Carolina a letter to Thomas Smyth declared:

> The Union party is dead in the Old North State....My heart's sympathy has been with noble chivalrous South Carolina, & I rejoiced & praised the God of Battle, & of right, when the news reached us of the surrender of

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[1] William Henry Foote to Francis McFarland, MS letter, February 16, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2] Central Presbyterian, April 20, 1861.

> Sumter, & that without a life lost by the Confederate troops--[1]

Another North Carolinian felt that the issue would soon be resolved in the South's favor:

> If His people will do their duty this fearful Storm will soon be hushed in quietness and peace: or we shall be enabled to go forward & Teach the mad & Crazy fanatics of the North a lesson that will do both them & us a good long to be remembered....Let us work & pray & hope.[2]

In Georgia, Columbus Morrison abandoned his optimism about Lincoln and stated:

> A Proclamation of War and great call for Troops issued from Lincoln to all the States of the U.S. The intention is to invade the Confederacy and deluge far as possible with blood all the South.
>
> Abolition of Slavery is the sole purpose and must be attempted at the expence of life & ruin of the whole Southern country. Mankind is no less murderous than the low Bruits of creation.[3]

A letter from Brandon, Mississippi, informed Abner Porter, editor of the Southern Presbyterian, that all "Union men, alias, Submissionists, alias, Abolitionists" had been driven from the area; "The leaders of the Union men here, are now the most violent Secession, fire-eating war men we have."[4] In Tennessee Dr. J. N. Waddell, president of La Grange College, spoke of the determination of the South:

> Now, is it possible that men, who go into this contest under the circumstances which surround these Southern troops, can be conquered? Never! Never! There is no fanaticism here. There is the deep, stern, fixed, and

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[1]Thomas Skinner to Thomas Smyth, MS letter, April 16, 1961. Thomas Smyth Papers, Montreat. The letter is also reprinted in part in Smyth, Notes, pp. 617-618.

[2]Stephen Neal to Calvin Wiley, MS letter, May 2, 1861. Calvin Wiley Papers, University of North Carolina.

[3]Columbus Morrison, MS diary, entry for April 16, 1861. University of North Carolina.

[4]Wm. Cameron to A. A. Porter, MS letter, June 7, 1861. A. A. Porter Papers, Montreat.

> united purpose to go through this contest without a thought of abandoning it until the righteous ends we aim at are obtained, or die in the attempt. But we shall not fail. God is for us, who then can conquer us?[1]

A similar view was affirmed by an Alabama Presbyterian: "I cannot believe the Lord will allow those fiendish Northern hordes to prevail against us."[2]

The opening months of the War, in Southern Presbyterian eyes, fully justified such optimism. The success of the Confederate Army at the Battle of Manassas ("First Bull Run") on July 21 was the occasion for countless sermons and comments expressing the conviction that God was favoring the South. The Central Presbyterian stated, "Truly we have ground for gratitude to God....let every heart look up to that God who has thus far so signally blessed us in this great contest."[3] Dr. Robert Lewis Dabney, who had joined the staff of General Thomas J. Jackson and had thus participated in the battle, declared, "We have great cause for gratitude to God for our deliverance from our ruthless invaders."[4] A minister in Virginia expressed similar sentiments to his congregation:

> Without /God's/ aid position, ability, & courage would have been wanting, or unavailing. We are constrained to say, in the language of the text: "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."[5]

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[1] True Witness, quoted by Central Presbyterian, June 8, 1861.

[2] A. M. Watson to A. A. Porter, MS letter, June 5, 1861. A. A. Porter Papers, Montreat.

[3] Central Presbyterian, July 27, 1861.

[4] Robert Dabney to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 24, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[5] W. A. Campbell, MS sermon, July 28, 1861. W. A. Campbell Papers, Montreat.

The Presbytery of Florida took a similar position, holding a special service of thanksgiving "for the signal victory with which He has been pleased to crown our arms in the recent battle of Manassas Junction, Va."[1] More cautious was a sermon of Isaac Naff, who acknowledged that God had shown His blessing on the South, but warned that the final outcome was in God's hands.[2]

The completeness of sectional feeling was revealed as well in an undisguised hatred of the North. Drury Lacy wrote to his daughter concerning the cessation of the circulation of Northern newspapers, and commented:

> For one, I am glad they are stopt, & I trust forever stopt, & that their abominable literature of paper & pictures, as well as every other abominable thing will be kept at home, & no longer pollute our minds & hearts. From my heart, I wish all intercourse between the two sections--of men--women--books--papers--cheese--& all their notions & whimmididdles--had been cut off 40 years ago. Like you, I am glad I have no kin--no friend--no interest--no nothing there.[3]

A similar attitude was indicated in a letter to Abner Porter:

> ...hot anguished tears blind my eyes and dark, revengful, bitter hatred fills my heart for those who are waging this unholy war on us. I know it is dreadfully wicked in me, and displeasing in the sight of God to feel thus, and I do pray earnestly to Him to give me grace to overcome it, and sometimes, but not often, I can pray, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."[4]

Not all, however, backed the secessionist movement

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[1]Quoted in Cooper C. Kirk, "A History of the Southern Presbyterian Church in Florida, 1821-1891." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Florida State University, 1966, p. 211.

[2]Isaac Naff, MS sermon, November 15, 1861. Isaac Naff Papers, Montreat.

[3]Drury Lacy to "Daughter," MS letter, November 27, 1861. Drury Lacy Papers, University of North Carolina.

[4]H. E. Shinholser to A. A. Porter, MS letter, June 19, 1861. A. A. Porter Papers, Montreat.

without considering the dangers that might face the South. Typical was the comment of one Presbyterian woman:

> My heart shrinks from...this appalling scene--Our Country once so glorious, is now in the midst of Civil War! Merciful God!...oh let this night of gloom end in a morning of joy.[1]

In Georgia, another woman exclaimed:

> Oh, this wicked, cruel war! When will it end? The Lord has hitherto helped us....If our enemies could only see the folly of expecting to subjugate the South or reconstruct the broken Union, there might be some prospect of peace.[2]

B. M. Smith of Union Seminary expressed a wish to withdraw from the threatened invasion of the South:

> Surely God's wrath is on us....I look with the most lively concern & apprehension on my dear little ones & I feel that I would rejoice to find some little quiet retreat in the mountains where I should never hear more of these tumults & wars.[3]

Another Virginian spoke in similar terms:

> Distress for our country, rests upon me with crushing might night & day. It is the last thing with me at night, & the 1st thing in the morning. This I know ought not so to be. Our relations to God ought to be our first & last thoughts. The cloud indeed is a dark & threatening one. There is no place where we can hide & be in safety, but in God.[4]

More pointed was the statement of Henry Ruffner, who declared to his daughter that "the people have become insane....In short, ruin

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[1]Mrs. Jane Evans Elliot, MS diary, entry for April 26, 1861. Montreat.

[2]Mary Robarts to Mary Jones, August 17, 1861. Reprinted in Robert Manson Myers, op. cit., p. 739. Original MS in Jones Family Papers, Tulane University.

[3]B. M. Smith to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 6, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[4]Samuel Brown to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 8, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

is staring us in the face...."[1]

Support for the Confederacy was not unanimous, however, although instances are difficult to find. A pastor in Georgia complained that two-thirds of his congregation were of unionist sympathies, "And I long to live in some place, if it can be found this side of heaven, where a real, genuine Yankee will be a sight unseen."[2] Simeon Colton, who had blamed the South for the War, declared his opposition to the War in the privacy of his diary:

> Thursday has been appointed by Mr. Davis of the Southern confederacy as a day of fasting & prayer....I am to try to preach....I cannot however pray as Mr. Davis urges that God would give success to the armies of the South because I believe they are engaged in a bad cause. I can and do most fervently pray that God will heal the breach between the North & South, controll the passions of men and dispose them to peace.[3]

In summary, therefore, by the time of the beginning of hostilities in April, 1861, Southern Presbyterians had adopted almost universally a position of sympathy with the Confederacy. In the lower South--particularly South Carolina--sectional sentiment was almost unanimous during the period which climaxed in the

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[1]Henry Ruffner to "daughter," MS letter, May 7, 1861. Ruffner Papers, Montreat.

[2]R. A. Mickle to A. A. Porter, MS letter, July 25, 1861. A. A. Porter Papers, Montreat. See also a letter by the same correspondent dated October 10, 1861. Mickle was pastor in Griffin, Georgia.

[3]Simeon Colton, MS diary, entry for June 13, 1861. Simeon Colton Papers, University of North Carolina. Further examples of ministers who were not loyal to the Confederacy are given by William Wade, op. cit., pp. 226-244. Of special significance is his observation that three of the seven ministers in Holston Presbytery maintained their loyalty to the Northern Assembly during the War, and in Knoxville Presbytery one of the four members of the Presbytery refused to join the Southern Assembly. (Ibid., p. 226). Unionist sentiment was comparatively strong in East Tennessee during the course of the War. See also the useful survey of W. Harrison Daniel, "Protestant Clergy and Union Sentiment in the Confederacy," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Vol. 23, pp. 284-290. Daniel cites several instances of Presbyterians who had Unionist sympathies in Tennessee.

secession of South Carolina, while in other areas attitudes tended to be unionist in character until a later date. However, once the national stance was abandoned, Southern Presbyterians gave strong support to the Confederacy, although many were anxious about the eventual outcome of the conflict. There was a sincere conviction for many that the Southern cause was morally right, and that God's blessing on the Confederacy was evident in the apparent initial success of the Confederate armies.

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS AND ECCLESIASTICAL SECTIONALISM

With the abandonment of a national stance in regard to political matters, the transition to a totally sectional stance by Southern Presbyterians was virtually complete. However, there was one remaining tie which Southern Presbyterians retained with the North; this was their relationship with the Old School General Assembly. The full transition to a strictly sectional position would only be complete when this tie was broken and a separate Southern Assembly formed.

In spite of the course of political events, there was a surprising optimism on the part of Southern Presbyterians that unity between North and South could be maintained within the General Assembly. The editor of the North Carolina Presbyterian stated:

> "THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH, amidst all political convulsions, should be the motto of every Presbyterian in the land.... Let there be no North nor South in the Church, but all be one in Christ Jesus....The Church has taken her position from the Bible on the slavery question, and so long as that is maintained, there can be no strife nor division in all our bounds."[1]

The editor of the True Witness (New Orleans) stated that he had

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[1] North Carolina Presbyterian, December 22, 1860.

traveled throughout the South seeking opinion concerning ecclesiastical division, and had found almost unanimous support for continued unity.[1] The Spring, 1861, meetings of the Southern presbyteries saw the vast majority of them voting to appoint commissioners to the next General Assembly meeting; those who refused included several of the presbyteries in the Synod of South Carolina. The Presbytery of Arkansas stated that they would "...resist all attempts to divide or sectionalize our hitherto harmonious and united church."[2]

The actual outbreak of war, and the consequent increase in tension between the two sections, led to a new pessimism about the practicality of a united Assembly. In Georgia, Dr. Charles Colcock Jones expressed his conviction that the Assembly could not remain united:

> The church must be divided....We are two people distinctly and politically now--what we have been in fact for the last ten or fifteen years. To continue the union of the church after we are divided nationally is contrary to the usage of the Church of Christ in all ages.[3]

In North Carolina one of the commissioners spoke of the impossibility of Southerners attending the General Assembly:

> I suppose I need say but little about our trip to the Genl Assembly. The events of the past few weeks will render it simply out of the question for Southern men to visit Philadelphia even on the peaceful mission we had in view....It will I guess be the means of sundering the ties of our beloved church & the Genl Assembly of the P. Church South will soon be formed.[4]

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[1] William Wade, op. cit., p. 80, quoting the Presbyterian Herald, April 25, 1861.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Arkansas, MS, April, 1861, Vol. 2, pp. 49-50.

[3] Charles Colcock Jones to Rev. David H. Porter, April 30, 1861. Reprinted in Robert Manson Myers, op. cit., p. 670. Original MS in Jones Family Papers, Tulane University.

[4] Stephen Neal to Calvin Wiley, MS letter, May 2, 1861. Calvin Wiley Papers, University of North Carolina.

For some there were fears that a visit to Philadelphia would result in physical violence, as noted in a letter from a Virginian:

> It seems more a matter of doubt whether either the Commissioners or documents from the South will reach Philadelphia this spring. Indeed, as far as I can now see, I cannot think it the duty of our Southern members to attempt to go. In all probability, even should they reach the City without molestation, there would be some wicked Abolitionists there ready to insult & even mob them. You see from the papers, that they are already calling attention to the fact that the Old School Assembly is to meet in Philadelphia this month....I should feel very uneasy for our Southern members, as things are at present.[1]

A similar position was taken by William S. White, scheduled to be a commissioner from his Presbytery: "And it has come to this, that we dare not go even to the good Quaker city of Philadelphia, lest we suffer from the hands of violence."[2] The editor of the Central Presbyterian expressed his feeling that a division of the Church was inevitable, although indicating that such a separation should be peaceful:

> I have now scarcely a hope left that our church can survive this trial as one church. But surely we ought to refrain from anything rash, and do nothing ahead of the light of God's providence.[3]

The actions of the 1861 Old School General Assembly were

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[1] Samuel Brown to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 8, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[2] William S. White to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 9, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[3] William Brown to Francis McFarland, MS letter, May 17, 1861. McFarland Papers, Montreat. Compare with Brown's statement a few weeks earlier: "...there is no doubt of a strong desire over our Synod to preserve the integrity of the Presbyterian Church (O.S.) as long as it can be done usefully and comfortably. How long this may be practicable must be decided under light not yet fully given.--Certainly no steps should be taken for a division now. Should it come, let it be for imperative reasons, forced upon us from without, and therefore unsought." Central Presbyterian, May 4, 1861.

unquestionably a shock to many in the South, and in effect the adoption of the so-called Spring Resolutions by that Assembly marked the end of all hopes for an undivided Church, or for an amicable division of the Church.[1] The main problem for Southerners was the second resolution of Dr. Spring which identified the Federal Government as the one government to which loyalty should be given by American Christians:

> Resolved, 2. That in the judgment of this Assembly, it is the duty of the ministry and churches under its care to do all in their power to promote and perpetuate the integrity of these United States, and to strengthen, uphold, and encourage the Federal Government.[2]

The reaction in the South was unanimously bitter. The Southern Presbyterian, for example, stated: "It seems to us impossible to remain in our present position one moment longer than is necessary to get out of it."[3] The North Carolina Presbyterian affirmed that the action of the General Assembly was carried out by "the arrogant majority, whose determination to rule has resulted in the ruin of the Church."[4] The Central Presbyterian declared: "No reasonable man should, for a moment, suppose the Southern part of the Old School Presbyterian Church will submit to the audacity of this POLITICAL Action of that body."[5] An Alabama Presbyterian called

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[1] For studies of the 1861 General Assembly see Wade, op. cit., pp. 89-106, and Lewis G. Vander Velde, The Presbyterian Churches and the Federal Union, 1861-1869. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1932), pp. 42-87.

[2] GA Minutes (O.S.), 1861, pp. 329-330.

[3] Southern Presbyterian, June 22, 1861.

[4] North Carolina Presbyterian, July 19, 1861.

[5] Central Presbyterian, June 22, 1861.

the Assembly "remarkable for the dulness & ignorance displayed by the speakers."[1] Perhaps typical of many was the feeling expressed by another Presbyterian from Alabama:

> I have clung to the idea of an undivided Presbyterian Church as long as any minister in our Presbytery. I had hoped that there would be no schism; although I saw clearly that the political disruption involved the necessity of two separate organizations. But the Assembly has added schism to its other sins and must now be charged with the crime of rending the Church asunder violently. They have made allegiance to the United States a test of fellowship and have thus forced us to separation. There is no escape from it now, and I am now ready to act on the instant.[2]

A similar sentiment was expressed by a Virginia minister:

> Important questions demand the attention of all our Southern Presbyteries. The act of the last Gen. Assem. O.S. on Dr. Spring's resolutions, virtually expelled us all from that Ecclesiastical connexion; and we must have a Southern Assembly next Spring.[3]

Action leading to the formation of a separate Southern Assembly was not long in coming. Perhaps the first judicatory to take formal action was the Presbytery of Memphis, which met only a few days after the conclusion of the General Assembly. The Presbytery called the Assembly action "a perversion and prostitution of its high power and dignity, to sectional partyism and fanaticism" and declared its connection with the Assembly dissolved.[4]

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[1] A. Nott to A. A. Porter, MS letter, June 14, 1861. A. A. Porter Papers, Montreat.

[2] J. M. Pratt to A. A. Porter, MS letter, June 27, 1861. A. A. Porter Papers, Montreat.

[3] Jesse Armistead to unidentified correspondent, MS letter, no date. Armistead Papers, Union Theological Seminary. It should be noticed that Southern Presbyterians saw a close parallel between the political division of the country and the ecclesiastical division of the Church. Just as the North was at fault for causing the South to withdraw from the Union, so the Northern Presbyterians were at fault for requiring the Southern Presbyterians to withdraw from the Church.

[4] Minutes of the Presbytery of Memphis, MS, June, 1861. Vol. 2, pp. 271-272.

It also called upon other Presbyteries to unite in forming a new Assembly.

In a real sense the Southern Presbyterian reaction to the Spring Resolutions marked the end of the transition to a completely sectional stance. As soon as the content of the Resolutions was known in the South it was recognized that ecclesiastical division was a certainty; the organizational work setting up a new denomination only formalized the complete sectionalism which already existed. The story of the formation of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America has been the subject of various studies and is beyond the scope of our present inquiry.[1] We shall, however, note a few points which demonstrate the completely sectional stance which was adopted after the Spring Resolutions.

Three major reasons were given by Southern Presbyterians for forming a separate denomination. The first was a pragmatic reason, namely, that the Southern portion of the Church could do its mission most effectively only if the Church were freed from all hint of association with the North. Typical was the statement adopted by the Synod of Virginia:

> ...the Protestant Churches have usually determined the boundaries of ecclesiastical divisions by those of Governments. This usage we hold is not a violation of the spiritual unity of the visible Church catholic. But it best promotes the convenience and usefulness of the churches, as well as the comities of intercourse between them. ...We therefore judge that the Presbyterians in the Confederate States of America should form a separate ecclesiastical connection, corresponding to their separate Confederate existance, and should henceforth hold their former brethren of the United

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[1] See, for example, E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 566-571; Thomas Cary Johnson, A History of the Southern Presbyterian Church, pp. 331-356; William Wade, op. cit., pp. 118-189.

> States of America, as they hold Christians of kindred creeds in other foreign governments.[1]

Behind this statement there is, of course, an implied acquiesence of the political division of the nation.

The second reason for a division of the Church was more theological in character. Southern Presbyterians, especially since the commencement of controversies over slavery, had developed a strong sense of the spirituality of the Church, i.e., the conviction that the Church should not impinge in any way on political matters.[2] To them, however, the action of the 1861 Old School General Assembly was a blatant betrayal of the spirituality of the Church. By decreeing that allegiance was to be given to the Federal Government, the Assembly had made a political, not theological, decision in Southern eyes. The Synod of Nashville stated the matter concisely: "This action is evidently unconstitutional, transcending the legitimate jurisdiction of the church, and en-

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, October, 1861. Vol. 9, pp. 269-270.

[2] The most extensive formulation of the doctrine of the spirituality of the Church was that of James Henley Thornwell. The Southern emphasis on the doctrine, however, dates back earlier, appearing especially during the beginning of the period of agitation over slavery. For examples see supra, pp. 121-126. Later Southern Presbyterians tended to see the doctrine as one of the major distinctives of the Southern Presbyterian Church; see, for example, Thomas Cary Johnson, A History of the Southern Presbyterian Church, pp. 422-427.

It should also be noted, however, that the doctrine received no systematic formulation before the Civil War. There is no comprehensive treatment of Thornwell's scattered statements on ecclesiology; a brief treatment is Paul Garber, "The Religious Thought of James Henley Thornwell," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1939, pp. 218-226, 260-271. His ecclesiology is also examined by Morton H. Smith, Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology, (Amsterdam: Drukkerij En Uitgeverij Jacob Van Campen, 1962), pp. 172-179.

croaching upon the province of the State."[1]

The third reason was, however, the most compelling reason for separation. This was the unreserved commitment of Southern Presbyterians to the government of the Confederate States of America. It is instructive to note that many Southern presbyteries which condemned the 1861 General Assembly for taking a political stance included in their resolutions an affirmation of support for the Confederacy. Such resolutions, in fact, are a vivid illustration of the degree to which Southern Presbyterians were committed to a purely sectional stance. Numerous examples could be cited, but we shall note several which are typical. The first example is the action of the Presbytery of East Hanover (Virginia) in connection with the Assembly action:

> ...being in violation of the provision of our constitution which declares "that God alone is Lord of the conscience...," We therefore repudiate it; and here place upon record our settled determination and what we believe to be the settled determination of the members of our churches, "to strengthen, uphold and encourage" in every christian way the government of the Confederate States.[2]

A second example is the statement adopted by the Synod of Georgia:

> We condemn the adoption of the resolutions known as Dr. Spring's....But it is the atrocious and tyrrannical character of the measures adopted, requiring us to be traitors to the Government of these Confederate States, of which we most cordially approve, that renders it incumbent upon us to sever completely, as we hereby solemnly do, all connexion between this Synod and that General Assembly.[3]

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Nashville, MS, October, 1861. Vol. 1, p. 226.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, MS, October, 1861, Vol. 3, p. 359.

[3] Minutes of the Synod of Georgia, printed, November, 1861, p. 13.

A final illustration of a Southern presbytery which condemned the political stance of the Assembly, while in turn adopting another political stance, is the action of the Presbytery of West Hanover:

> Resolved, that West Han. Pbty. reply to such action by the said Genl. Assembly by the adoption of the following resolutions:
>
> That holding that our political allegiance is due, & shall be maintained at every hazard, to the constitution & government of the State of Virginia, & of the Confederate States of America:
>
> 1. Resolved, that the G.A. aforesaid, in calling on Presbyterians in the Southern States, to uphold & sustain the Federal government in its unrighteous war on their rights, & institutions, & homes, has not only transcended its legitimate powers, but has been guilty of a monstrous outrage on their feelings & their privileges.[1]

The completely sectional stance of Southern Presbyterians was formalized with the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. In December, 1861, representatives of the Southern Presbyteries met in Augusta, Georgia, to complete the formation of the new denomination. For the most part the Assembly avoided political references, but there was little doubt that the new denomination was firmly committed to the fortunes of the South. Dr. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, whose Thanksgiving Day sermon supporting the South had been widely circulated, delivered the opening sermon of the Assembly and was subsequently chosen moderator. The "Narrative of the State of Religion" expressed praise for the "generosity of feeling and a self-sacrificing liberality" which had characterized the Southern population in their efforts to relieve the wounded in the armies.[2] More pointedly sectional was the

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of West Hanover, MS, August, 1861, Vol. 5, p. 19.

[2] GA Minutes (PCCSA), 1861, p. 43.

"Address by the General Assembly to all the Churches of Jesus Christ Throughout the Earth."[1] The "Address," written mainly by Thornwell, was a lengthy defense of the Southern Presbyterian Church against the charge of schism; also included was a defense of the Southern position on slavery.

In one sense the organization of the General Assembly marked the end of an era for Southern Presbyterians. Since their beginnings in the South they had maintained strong ties with their brethren in the rest of the nation. Gradually those ties became weaker until, under the pressure of powerful political currents, the ties were broken.

In another sense, however, the events of 1861 marked the beginning of a new era for Southern Presbyterians. As they faced the future, they expressed optimism over the rightness of their course. Throughout the Civil War this optimism continued, and even after the collapse of the Confederacy Southern Presbyterians seldom doubted but what their course had been correct.

In a deeper sense, however, the events of 1861 were only a milepost in the continuing history of Presbyterians in the American South. Once the Church had moved irrevocably into a role of defending and supporting Southern society in the 1830's, it was inevitable that its future would be inextricably bound with the changing fortunes of the South.

The strength of the Church's commitment to Southern

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[1] Ibid., pp. 51-60. A major section of the "Address" is conveniently accessible in Smith, Handy and Loetscher, American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), Vol. 2, pp. 206-210. The original MS of the "Address", written in Thornwell's hand and signed by each commissioner, is at Montreat. For an analysis of the "Address" see W. Wade, op. cit., pp. 161-164.

society and its institutions was such that even a tragic and painful Civil War was not able to break that commitment. Over one hundred years after the Civil War, Presbyterians in the American South still remain a separate denomination.

APPENDIX: SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS AND THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE SLAVES

Introduction

Barriers to Slave Evangelism

Motives for Slave Missions

The Methods of Slave Instruction

Examples of Missions to Slaves

Evaluation

APPENDIX

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS AND THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE SLAVES

As has been indicated in the previous pages, Southern Presbyterians were deeply concerned about the institution of slavery. A major part of their concern was directed toward the religious instruction of the slave population. Although this subject is beyond the immediate scope of our present work, it nevertheless gives additional insight on the Southern Presbyterian relationship to Southern society. For that reason we shall be examining in some detail in this appendix the various aspects of Southern Presbyterian missionary efforts among slaves.[1]

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[1] The religious instruction of the slave population by Southerners has yet to receive a comprehensive modern treatment. The only thorough attempt to assess the work of one denomination is Stiles Bailey Lines, "Slaves and Churchmen: The Work of the Episcopal Church among Southern Negroes, 1830-1860" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1960). An attempt to survey various aspects of the subject is Haven P. Perkins, "Religion for Slaves: Difficulties and Methods" Church History, 1941, pp. 228-245. More satisfactory is Luther P. Jackson, "Religious Instruction of Negroes, 1830-1860, with Special Reference to South Carolina," Journal of Negro History, Vol. 15 (1930), pp. 72-114. Also useful is Luther P. Jackson, "Religious Development of the Negro in Virginia from 1760 to 1860," Journal of Negro History, Vol. 16, (1931), pp. 168-239. A valuable general survey of the subject, including useful information about the legal problems connected with slave instruction, is that of Winthrop Jordan, White over Black (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 179-215. Jordan's analysis, however, ends in 1812. More stimulating is the study of David Brion Davis, op. cit., pp. 221-247. Also useful for the work of various groups within one state is Guion Griffis Johnson, Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), pp. 541-550. In many ways, however, the most valuable survey of mission efforts among slaves is still the work of Charles Colcock Jones, The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States (Savannah: Thomas Purse, 1842). Hereafter referred to as Jones, Religious Instruction. All of the above include the work of various

Unlike the previous sections of this work, our discussion of the religious instruction of the slaves will not follow a strictly chronological sequence. As we shall see, there were several periods of increased missionary activity among the slaves by Presbyterians. However, it is not legitimate to speak of chronological development; most of the major patterns of work among slaves were already evident by the beginning of the period. We shall, therefore, begin our study by examining various barriers which limited missions among slaves. We shall then examine the motives which led Southern Presbyterians into slave missions. Next we shall detail some of the methods which were used in reaching the slave population, and look at some specific examples of work by Southern Presbyterians. A final section will attempt to assess the results of Southern Presbyterian efforts among slaves.

BARRIERS TO SLAVE EVANGELISM

The opening decades of the Nineteenth Century were marked by a deepened interest in both foreign and domestic missions among American Christians. It was logical, therefore, for Southern Presbyterians to turn their attention to the vast mission field among the slaves in the South during this period. We have noted that Presbyterians in the South before 1789 had frequently undertaken evangelistic work among slaves; in a sense, therefore, the work after 1789 was simply a continuation of these previous efforts.[1] Efforts after 1789, however, were often stymied by various barriers, several of which had not been evident previously.

In general, the barriers to slave evangelization were of

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denominations, although Jones devotes much space to Presbyterian efforts. Specific attention to the work of Presbyterians is given by Murray, op. cit., pp. 46-62, and E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 204-211; 434-444.

[1] Supra, pp. 5-18.

two types. The first set of barriers included problems within the Church which made efforts among slaves difficult. The second type included those barriers within society which made the religious instruction of the slave population difficult or, in some cases, virtually impossible. These two types of barriers were closely related, in that some of the problems within the Church would not have existed to any significant degree had there not also been barriers within society.

Among the first kind of barriers--problems within the Church which hindered slave evangelization--five may be mentioned. The first of these was the minority status of Presbyterians, and the feeling that the Church should direct its efforts toward those segments of the population which were most likely to respond, namely, the white population. In the face of general religious ignorance in the society as a whole, the Church, it was implied, must make its impact where it would be felt the most. The editor of The Missionary, for example, spoke of the grave challenge facing Presbyterians:

> In twelve civil districts of South Carolina, some of which are populous, and overflowing with wealth, there are, as nearly as can be ascertained, about 230,000 souls, including whites and colored people. In this extensive territory there is not one Congregational preacher; but one Episcopalian; two Scotch; and five Presbyterian. 25,000 people, in these districts, may be supposed to have religious instruction, more or less constantly, from Baptist and Methodist preachers. About 4,000 more, perhaps, are connected with all other denominations; amounting to 29,000 thus supplied, and leaving 201,000 souls, not regularly connected with any Christian denomination.[1]

The objection was stated most clearly by Charles Colcock Jones, who placed the excuse on the lips of an imagined opponent, and then sought to answer it:

> The whites themselves are destitute; we cannot obtain

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[1] The Missionary, March 16, 1821.

> ministers in sufficient numbers to supply our own destitutions; and when ministers may be obtained, we are not at all times able to support them. Servants cannot expect to fare better than their masters. Great numbers must necessarily continue destitute of the Gospel.
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> There is much truth, and painful truth, in the excuse.... But the excuse cannot be admitted as valid, where suitable efforts have not been made to procure a minister, and suitable compensation offered for his services....There is too an error in the excuse, that of separating the spiritual wants of the owners from those of their servants. They form one community, one household, and he that ministers to one, should to the other.[1]

A second problem within the Church was the lack of any satisfactory method which could be applied to the peculiar situation of the slave population. As we shall note, various methods came to be used, but there was no agreement on the best way to reach the slave. As a further aspect of this problem, there was never any large scale united action on the part of Southern Presbyterians concerning slave evangelization, although proposals for some type of Southern slave mission society were voiced from time to time. In spite of the hundreds of resolutions passed by Presbyterians and Synods during this period, there was almost no presbytery-wide or synod-wide organization directed at slave evangelism. Most efforts were dependent on the initiative of local churches or concerned individuals. It is significant that in an age which brought forth innumerable benevolent societies which united Christians from different geographical areas to promote a bewildering variety of causes, there was never any similar society formed among Southern Presbyterians to evangelize the slaves.

A third problem concerned the nature of the Presbyterian Church and its ministry. Presbyterian worship tended to be unemotional, and the preacher usually assumed his congregation was capable of understanding a relatively intellectual discourse. However, the average

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[1]C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 181-182.

slave was unlettered and found little in the Presbyterian form of worship to attract him.

> ...let the negroes now come to hear the preaching of Ministers to white congregations, and such is the elevation of their language and thought--such the amount of knowledge they take for granted in their audiences, that they might as well preach in Hebrew or Greek. The negroes do not understand them. And hence, their stupid looks, their indifferent staring, their profound sleeps, and their thin attendance.[1]

As a result, Presbyterians found that most slaves were attracted to the Methodist or Baptist denominations, which tended to provide preaching of a simplier and more emotional variety.

A further difficulty was undoubtedly the problem of assimilating slaves into the Church once they had been evangelized. Except for the period near the end of our present study, there was much resistance toward allowing slaves to have their own church buildings and government. However, slaves who became members of a white church did not contribute in any significant way to the work of the Church, and it was generally assumed that they would be responsible for an inordinately high percentage of disciplinary cases brought before the church session.[2]

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[1] Report of the Committee to whom was Referred the Subject of the Religious Instruction of the Colored Population, of the Synod of South-Carolina and Georgia, at its late Session in Columbia, (South Carolina,) December 5th-9th, 1833. (Charleston: Observer Office Press, 1834), p. 7. Hereafter referred to as S.C.-Ga. Synod Report. Note also the comment of a visitor from Scotland to the South: "I am sorry to observe that the slaves do not love the Presbyterian Church and its forms of worship. There is too little of feeling and excitement for the negro taste, who is a most excitable being....The Methodists and Baptists are more to their taste." George Lewis, op. cit., pp. 177-178. A similar statement came from a pastor in Georgia: "I have a school for the blacks in one of the churches to which I preach, but I find that they are so fond of excitement that they will rather go ten miles to hear a negro preach, than one mile to listen to catechetical instruction. The masters ought to require them to attend." Henry Newton to John McLees, MS letter, June 3, 1846. John McLees Papers, University of South Carolina.

[2] "The discipline of colored members is involved, tedious, vexatious and disgusting....I have heard the observation made by men whose standing and office in the churches afforded them abundant opportunity for observation, that the more they have had to do with colored members, the less

One final barrier might be mentioned. This was the fact that the Church was often preoccupied with other issues which diverted it from any deep interest in the evangelization of the slaves. This is perhaps seen most clearly during the period of the Old School-New School controversy; during that time there was comparatively little interest in slave evangelism expressed by Southern Presbyterian judicatories or newspapers.

Barriers within the Church, however, were only part of the problems facing the Church in any attempt to undertake slave missions. Of equal importance were the external barriers coming from various sources within Southern society. In general these were of two types. The first consisted of legal difficulties presented by various state laws, while the second involved the objections of planters to the idea of religious instruction for slaves.

The legal barriers differed from state to state. No state, of course, expressly forbade the religious instruction of slaves. However, various limitations were placed on slaves which made such instruction difficult, especially after the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831 and the rise of Northern abolitionism during the 1830's. By the mid-1830's many Southern states had explicitly forbidden teaching slaves to read; this meant automatically that a slave could not be taught to read the Bible or the Catechism. In addition, most states about the same period forbade preaching by black preachers; while this did not affect most Presbyterian efforts, it did limit any plan in the future which would have utilized black exhorters or preachers.[1] Furthermore,

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confidence they have been compelled to place in their Christian profession ....charity demands that we should consider their condition and circumstances and make very great allowances." C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 131-132.

[1]Perhaps the most notable example of a Presbyterian who was affected by

some states outlawed any meetings of slaves, unless responsible whites were present.[1]

The barrier posed by the objections of planters and others to the religious instruction of slaves was in many ways more formidable,

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such laws was John Chavis, a black preacher in North Carolina. See supra, p. 73.

[1]Given their view of the God-ordained character of the government, it is clear why Southern Presbyterians voiced little objection to legal restrictions. An example of the reaction of Southern Presbyterians to legislative restrictions is the statement of the Presbytery of Hopewell (Georgia), dealing with the case of a black man who had apparently been preaching: "Resolved, That we concur with the synod of South Carolina and Georgia, and with the senate of the last Legislature of this State, that it is inexpedient to authorize coulored (sic) persons to hold religious meetings,--and we therefore recommend to the church at Bethesda to refuse permission to George Loveless (a coloured man) to preach or exhort in public." Minutes of the Presbytery of Hopewell, MS, March, 1832, p. 460. The resolution of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, to which reference is made by the Presbytery of Hopewell, gives additional insight into Southern reactions: "The Synod deeply sympathise with the citizens of South Carolina & Georgia in their present feelings in regard to our colored population. They are, many of them, personally interested in this species of property, & feel themselves called upon to co-operate as citizens in all measures that have for their object the preservation of the good order of Society....They do also concur in the opinion general amongst our citizens that the preaching of colored men should be subjected to stricter regulations, or set aside, & that competent white instructors be employed in their stead....They would, therefore, feel themselves bound to do all in their power to communicate such religious instruction as is in perfect correspondence with the civil institutions of our country." Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, December, 1831, p. 309. The Charleston Observer took note of suggestions that more stringent restrictions be placed on religious meetings for slaves, but expressed optimism "that special pains will be taken to render legislation upon this subject conformable to the views of the leading Christian denominations, which compose our society." Charleston Observer, October 17, 1835.

A more direct statement opposing legislative restrictions was an earlier resolution passed by the Presbytery of Lexington (Virginia): "Resolved that this presbytery view with the deepest concern the late amendment to the Act in the Virginia Laws which prohibits Slaves from attending Sunday Schools to be taught to read the Word of God; and the principles of religion. Resolved that in the opinion of this Pby, said Law is at direct variance with the command of God, which requires all to "search the Scriptures."" Minutes of the Presbytery of Lexington, MS, Vol. 7, pp. 109-110 (April, 1820).

since without the cooperation of the owners of the slaves there would be no opportunity for extensive missionary activity.

The objections of planters to religious instruction were various, but almost all were related to the fear that the institution of slavery would be endangered. Many Southern planters were extremely wary of any outside influence on their slaves, and thus were opposed to having an outsider teach their slaves, regardless of the subject matter. Charles Colcock Jones sought to deal candidly with this objection:

> There are men, who if the door of access to the Negroes in the South were thrown open indiscriminately to all, would enter in to send among us not "peace" but literally "a sword." ...Against the introduction of "such" there cannot be too much vigilance observed....it is the dictate as well of benevolence as of prudence to inquire into the character and qualifications of those who enter it. They should be Southern men; men entitled to the apellation; either those who have been born and reared in the South, or those who have identified themselves with the South, and are familiarly acquainted with the structure of society; in a word, men having their interests in the South. Such men would possess the confidence of the community; for they would not act in their official connection with the Negroes, in such a manner as to breed disturbances, which would inevitably jeopard their own lives and tend to the utter prostration of their families and interests.[1]

The above statement indicates something of the exact nature of the fears of the planters. At the very least, many planters feared that if the slave population became Christian in the fullest sense, it

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[1]C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 195, 196. For an indication of "strong opposition" to a mission to slaves in South Carolina see Robert Wilson James to "Brother Petrie," MS letter, Robert Wilson James papers, Montreat. The letter is undated, but is probably around 1835. Note also the story of a preacher in Virginia who was threatened with jail if he continued to preach to slaves; the threat was strongly condemned by concerned Presbyterians. Southern Religious Telegraph, June 7, 1933. Along somewhat different lines was the opposition encountered by James Smylie of Mississippi, who devoted his later years to slave missions. "He is said to have stirred up the anger of the slave holders by sermons in which he flayed them for not performing their religious duties to the slaves." C. W. Grafton, History of the Mississippi Synod of the Presbyterian Church (Microfilm of typescript, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, n.d.), Chapter 8, page 13.

would tend to raise the slaves to the level of the white population. While there was little danger that this would lead to full legal equality, it was felt that the impact on the slaves themselves would be detrimental.[1] That is, slaves would begin to think themselves equal with their master, and would become insubordinate and neglectful of their duties. On a more serious level, however, was the fear that this sense of equality would lead eventually to insurrection.[2]

It was the general concensus of Southern Presbyterians that

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[1]Southern Presbyterians were always careful to point out that the conversion of a slave to Christianity in no way affected his political or legal status. Typical was the statement of Francis McFarland, in a sermon based on the book of Philemon: "We learn from this Epistle.... II. That for men to become Christians does not make any change in their Political State: & therefore it would be wrong to detain a servant from his master." MS sermon notes, July 5, 1835. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat. A similar position was taken by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia: "...we separate entirely their moral and their civil condition; and contend, that the one may be attended to, without interfering with the other....in judicious, religious instruction, there will be no necessary interference with their civil condition." S.C.-Ga. Synod Report, pp. 25-26. A stronger declaration came from a meeting of Virginia ministers, called to deal with the subject of slave missions: "We would inform some people who seem to fear the efforts of Christians, that it is no part of the gospel as believed and practiced in the Presbyterian Church, to violate the laws of the State, or disturb in any way, the peace of the community." Southern Religious Telegraph, April 11, 1834.

[2]For examples of various forms of this fear see C.C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 197-203.

On occasion Southern Presbyterians pointed out that giving religious instruction to slaves should not be accompanied by a slackening in discipline. C. C. Jones, the most noted Southern Presbyterian worker among slaves, urged, "I would suggest again, that the discipline of plantations be strictly continued and perfected. Some there are who relax discipline as soon as they begin to give religious instruction. Others suppose, that the fact of giving religious instruction, obliges a relaxation of discipline; and knowing that all success in planting would consequently be destroyed, discard such instruction altogether. We believe both to be wrong....In connection with proper discipine on plantations, the police of the County, for the helping of your efforts, should be strict." Annual Report of the Missionary to the Negroes, in Liberty County, (Ga.) Presented to the Association, November, 1833. (Charleston: The Observer Press, 1834), pp. 13-14. (There were thirteen annual reports given by Jones; hereafter these will be indicated as Jones, Annual Report, with the number and date.) Note also the statement by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, S.C.-Ga. Report, p. 29.

the opposition of planters to slave evangelization increased greatly after the rise of the militant abolition movement in the North. A Presbyterian in Alabama, for example, asserted that abolitionists had retarded the advance of the Gospel, since laws had been enacted forbidding teaching slaves to read.

> And their ignorance of letters, riveted upon them by the iron hand of law, as well as by public opinion, is a hinderance to the usefulness of the minister, which retards the progress of the Gospel among them than the dominion of caste in Hindostan. Letters and religion must go together, if either make rapid progress or become deeply rooted. But this is not to be expected among the slaves, since the exasperation produced by the Abolitionists....Liberty is not to be compared in value to religion; yet, in pursuit of the former, they have excluded thousands from the latter.[1]

A similar sentiment was voiced by the editor of the Charleston Observer:

> ...at the South the tendency of these Abolition measures is to check the efforts of those who would improve their character by imparting to them religious instruction, and their condition, by giving them as many privileges as are compatible with their general good.--This is the natural effect, and it has already proved, both directly and indirectly, a hindrance to those who take a special interest in the salvation of those who are in bondage among us.[2]

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[1] American Presbyterian, September 22, 1836.

[2] Charleston Observer, July 11, 1835. For other examples linking abolitionism with the opposition of planters to religious instruction see "Narrative of the State of Religion--Presbytery of South Carolina," Charleston Observer, May 2, 1835, and a letter in the Charleston Observer September 27, 1834. Also see Charleston Observer, November 21, 1840; American Presbyterian, August 27, 1835; and statements concerning opposition because of abolitionism from Florida and Mississippi in Watchman of the South, June 10, 1841. A clear example of the effects of the Southern reaction to abolitionism is seen in the action of the Synod of Virginia in 1834. A person attending the Synod meeting noted: "A scheme for imparting religious instruction to the slaves of this state, by setting apart ministers for that service alone, was next taken up....The arguments on both sides were listened to with a most intense interest by a crowded audience. After mature reflection, and patient investigation of the various bearings of this enterprise, it was concluded that, in view of the present agitated state of the public mind, in reference to that portion of the population, it was inexpedient, at present, to legislate in any shape or form; and so the whole subject was postponed." "The Late Meeting of the Synod of Virginia," Southern Religious Telegraph, November 14, 1834.

Abolition activities also had a more subtle effect on religious in-

The various barriers to work among the slaves, whether originating from inside or outside the Church, undoubtedly thwarted many attempts by Southern Presbyterians. Nevertheless, all available records of the period show a concern on the part of many to reach the slave population with the Gospel, in spite of the barriers. Typical of hundreds of resolutions and statements by Southern Presbyterians was that adopted by the Presbytery of South Alabama:

> The committee...could not fail to be convinced that a very solemn obligation was imposed on all persons having the controll of servants and especially on the religious community who are their owners, to prevail by all proper measures for teaching them their duty to God and man thus preparing them alike for the happiness of the life which is, and of that which is to come.[1]

The Presbytery of East Hanover spoke of the neglect of the subject, and urged swift action to remedy it:

> Resolved that Presbytery regard this matter as a subject to which the church has not heretofore given that attention which its very great importance demands & in which God in his Providence, as well as by his word, is now calling us to repentance; & that it be enjoined on all the Sessions of the Churches under our care to give their earliest & earnest attention to this subject, & upon the directors of the Missionary Society to give this subject in special charge to their Missionaries.[2]

A similar position was voiced by the editor of the Southern Religious

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struction. By allowing religious instruction to start among his slaves, a planter was tacitly admitting that the abolitionists were correct in their contention that Southern slavery had denied religious privileges to the slave. The dilemma was put succinctly by C. C. Jones: "There appears to be a misgiving that if we look diligently into the moral and religious condition of the Negroes, we shall make such discoveries that in order to satisfy conscience toward God and man, we shall be obliged to enter fully and vigorously upon the improvement of our people. ....To change their general course of treatment would be virtually acknowledging to them and to all the world that they have been in error; that they have not placed them as high in the scale of intellectual and moral being as they should have done; in short, that they have not done them justice." C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 108-109.

[1]Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, Vol. 3, p. 87, (September, 1834).

[2]Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, MS, Vol. 1, p. 220, (April, 1834).

Telegraph:

> Ought there to be lukewarmness, or opposition to the religious instruction of slaves?...Why should not every church, every minister and elder and every private christian, see that this is a cause in which all are deeply interested, and devise and adopt without delay, in their several districts of country, the best measures which circumstances will admit for efficient action? It is hazardous to sleep over this subject.[1]

Such statements were not confined to the 1830's, however. In 1859 a correspondent to the Central Presbyterian (Virginia) declared that the failure to carry out fully the task of slave evangelization was the greatest sin of the South:

> ...so far as we may judge, it appears that the sin, for which we of the South are most guilty, is the neglect of the religious training of the servants. If our conduct be examined in the light of God's word, I do not think we will appear far wrong in calling this the great sin of the Southern Church.... Let us in humility search our hearts, and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.[2]

Resolutions concerning slave missions, however, were not sufficient to overcome the barriers which existed. In order to do this two things were necessary. The first was a strong set of motives for undertaking such missions. The second was the development of methods which would accomplish the task successfully.

MOTIVES FOR SLAVE MISSIONS

The true motives behind any human action are often impossible to discover fully, and such is certainly the case with the motives for slave missions. Nevertheless, Southern Presbyterians expressed a variety of reasons for undertaking such activities. In general these motives can be grouped into two categories. The first

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[1]Southern Religious Telegraph, September 26, 1834.

[2]Central Presbyterian, March 5, 1859.

set of motives were religious in nature, seeing slave missions as an obligation upon the Church because of express Biblical commands. The second set of motives might be termed cultural. Cultural motives resulted from the conviction that the religious instruction of slaves would have a positive effect on society, and should therefore be undertaken for its long term impact on Southern culture.

Southern Presbyterians were convinced that the slave population had been placed in their midst by the providence of God. "It was by the permission of Almighty God, in his inscrutable providence over the affairs of men, that the Negroes were taken from Africa and transported to these shores."[1] For what purpose, therefore, had God allowed them to be brought to America? The answer was simple: it was to facilitate their conversion to Christianity. "They are providentially placed among us; and their circumstances call upon us for that moral and religious instruction which will conduce to their happiness, and prepare them to perform their duties as men and Christians.[2]

The religious motive had a twofold aspect. The first was the conviction that the slave population was, in general, heathen and therefore in need of the Gospel. Concerning this fact, it was felt, there could be little argument. Charles Colcock Jones, writing to a minister in Illinois, noted:

> In whatever light we may view the Negroes of the southern & western States, and from whatever quarter of the union we may take that view, benevolent & Christian men can but entertain one opinion in relation to their religious instruction.[3]

A similar statement came from the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia:

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[1] C.C. Jones, Religious Instruction, p. 159.

[2] "Narrative of the State of Religion" GA Minutes, 1837, p. 509.

[3] Charles Colcock Jones to Rev. J. M. Peck, MS letter, September 22, 1841. C.C. Jones Letter File, University of South Carolina.

> Believers in Divine Revelation, require no arguments to prove to them, that the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is designed for the whole human family.... who would credit it, that in these years of revival and benevolent effort, in this Christian Republic, there are over two millions of human beings in the condition of Heathen, and in some respects, in a worse condition...almost entirely neglected?[1]

Not only was there a general obligation on the Church to preach to all who were not Christians, but the Scriptural commands concerning the relationship between master and slave demanded that religious instruction be imparted to slaves. The Presbytery of Hanover declared that responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the slaves rested in the hands of the Church, and especially Christian masters:

> Remember that they have immortal souls; that they are under your authority and direction; that all the sins which they commit through your neglect, all the ruin which is brought upon their souls on account of their ignorance of those truths in which you ought to have instructed them, will be charged upon you. We beseech you then to pay that attention to their best interests, which they deserve.[2]

In similar manner Charles Colcock Jones urged that the relationship of master and slave implied a spiritual responsibility:

> Can any one doubt that among the duties of Masters, is that of imparting, and causing to be imparted to them

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[1] S.C.-Ga. Synod Report, p. 3. Note also the statement of Henry Ruffner: "I feel as you do, the moral absurdity of the zeal that has been manifested for the conversion of Hindoos and Armenians, while a nation in the midst of us, as miserable as the most of them, was past unheeded by, and suffered to perish in ignorance at our very doors....If the zeal, labour and expense that have brought a few thousands of Asiatics into the church, had been judiciously employed on our coloured population, we have reason to think that some hundreds of thousands of them might have been made happy in the hope of heaven....But we have been so indignant at the fanatical ravings of Garrison and his crew, that we have forgotten to wrest from their frantic hands the most dangerous weapon that they can wield against us, or before the American public, or before the court of heaven." Henry Ruffner to William S. Plumer, MS letter, June 17, 1834. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society.

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Hanover, MS, Vol. 4, pp. 221-222. (April, 1807).

> the Gospel of Salvation?...If we neglect to evangelize our servants, they may justly have a controversy with us; and if we continue to despise their cause, in the day when God riseth up for judgement, we shall be speechless.[1]

Representative of numerous studies on the duties of masters to slaves was that of a Presbyterian in South Carolina:

> Because if it can be fairly proved that the Apostle baptized servants along with the children of a family, the inference is natural that the master must have incurred a responsibility in a religious sense, far greater than is generally thought of in these days by christian masters. If our servants have a right to the ordinance of baptism thro' our faith as masters, then our duty, as it relates to religious instruction, to our servants must be the same, or very similar, with our duty to our children....Now note this particular---there is not one sentiment in the Bible, strictly religious, with which the servant is not as directly interested as the child....[2]

A second aspect of the religious motive was more directly related to the great interest in foreign missions which characterized the period. This was the belief that missions among the slaves would eventually lead to the conversion of Africa. In this view, slaves who were converted might some day be sent to Africa as missionaries. This hope was expressed briefly by the General Assembly: "To what source so promising can we turn for missionaries to traverse the sands of Africa, as to this numerous people?" [3] A South Carolina pastor spoke

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[1] C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 164-165.

[2] Southern Christian Herald, February 3 and February 24, 1837. The view that the Biblically-sanctioned master-servant relationship included the obligation for the master to provide religious instruction is found frequently. For representative comments from various areas of the South and from various periods, see: The Virginia Religious Magazine, Vol. 2 (1806), pp. 161-170; Southern Evangelical Intelligencer, August 21, 1819; Charleston Observer, March 3, March 10, March 17, and March 24, 1838; Southern Religious Telegraph, July 4, 1834; American Presbyterian, February 5, 1835; Southern Presbyterian, January 6, 1854; Central Presbyterian, March 8, 1856. See also C.C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 161-165, and I.S.K. Axson, Individual Responsibility. An Address before the Association for the Religious Instruction of the Negroes, in Liberty County, Georgia; Delivered at the Annual Meeting, January 31, 1843. (Savannah: Thomas Purse, 1843).

[3] "Narrative of the State of Religion," GA Minutes, 1837, p. 509.

of his concern for a slave: "While in the woods at reading meditation and prayer Spensor came to me, with whom I conversed and prayed, having a strong desire that he might be converted, be educated, and sent as a missionary to Africa."[1] John McDonogh expressed the hope that some of his slaves who were being sent to Liberia might become missionaries.[2] The Synod of North Carolina sought to relate the colonization movement more directly to the evangelization of Africa:

> The plan now in operation, for transmitting the free part of that population to Africa, the land of their forefathers, has our most cordial approbation, & our earnest prayers for its success; and it is confidently hoped, that the prosecution of this plan, will carry civilization and Christianity into Africa.[3]

A similar viewpoint was taken in Virginia by Francis McFarland in a sermon on colonization:

> God can bring good out of evil....An evil to reduce them to slavery but if brought here & many of them Christianized & sent back then they will be profitable. They will introduce Civilization & religion into that dark continent.[4]

In spite of such statements, however, very little was ever done about training converted slaves for missionary service. The practical barriers were enormous, and there are very few examples of blacks being sent to Africa as missionaries by Southern Presbyterians.[5]

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[1]Rev. Anthony Pearson, MS diary, entry for April 28, 1831. Anthony Pearson Diary, Montreat.

[2]John McDonogh to J. M. Lowrie, MS letter, January, 1840. John McDonogh Papers, Tulane University.

[3]Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, (November, 1823), pp. 293-294. For a more extended series of resolutions linking foreign missions, colonization, and religious instruction see Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, Vol. 1, pp. 144-145 (April, 1833).

[4]Francis McFarland, MS sermon notes, July 5, 1835. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat.

[5]The most notable example was the purchase of a slave named Ellis, along with his family, by the Synod of Alabama. Ellis was apparently highly intelligent and self-educated, and as early as 1843 the Synod had dis-

The religious motives of Southern Presbyterians were sincere, and did much to direct their attention to slave missions. It cannot be denied, however, that cultural motives likewise played a significant part in encouraging such activities.

Cultural motives essentially were of two categories. The first involved the conviction that the religious instruction of the slave population would result in specific positive benefits for both slaves and slaveholders, as well as Southern society generally. The major benefit would be that slaves would become more content with their station in life and more obedient to their masters. Thus, problems of discipline and the danger of insurrection would be lessened. Typical was the sweeping statement of Charles Colcock Jones: "The Religious Instruction of the Negroes is the foundation of all permanent improvement in intelligence and morals in the Slave-holding States."[1] The same individual sought to make explicit the benefits of religious instruction:

> Religion will cause them to understand their duties better, and to perform them more perfectly and cheerfully ....Religious instruction would lead them to respect each other more, to pay greater regard to mutual character and rights; the strong would not so much oppress the weak;

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cussed the possibility of sending him to Africa, and had appealed for funds from neighboring Synods. After considerable difficulty in raising the necessary $2500.00, the purchase was completed on August 4, 1846, "a night which we trust will ever be memorable in the annals of our Southern Zion." He was ordained by the Presbytery of Tuskaloosa and sent to Liberia in 1847 under the Presbyterian Board of Missions. For information see: Minutes of the Synod of Alabama, MS, Vol. 1, p. 87 (January 1843); Vol. 1, pp. 160-161 (October, 1845); Vol. 1, pp. 208-213 (October, 1846); Vol. 1, pp. 236-238 (October, 1847); Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi for 1844, printed, p. 70; Minutes of the Presbytery of East Alabama, MS, Vol. 1, p. 60 (1843); Minutes of the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa, MS, Vol. 2, pp. 183-184 (September, 1846); Vol. 2, pp. 195-196 (October, 1846); Charleston Observer, February 18, 1843; Watchman of the South, May 4, 1843; Southern Presbyterian, March 1, 1848.

[1]Charles Colcock Jones to William S. Plumer, MS letter, June 28, 1834. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society.

> family relations would be less liable to rupture; in short, all the social virtues would be more honored and cultivated. Their work would be more faithfully done; their obedience more universal and more cheerfully rendered.[1]

A similar position was taken by the Watchman and Observer:

> ...the religious instruction of our negroes is of all things calculated to render them contented, happy, industrious, and useful, and to conciliate the blessing of our God on our domestic institutions, and render them safe and permanent....[2]

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[1] C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 208-209.

[2] Watchman and Observer, April 23, 1846. For other representative statements along similar lines note Charleston Observer, February 4, 1832, and October 24, 1835; Southern Religious Telegraph, September 26, 1834; Southern Presbyterian, March 20, 1851; See also the article "Slavery and the Religious Instruction of the Coloured Population," Southern Presbyterian Review, Vol. 4, pp. 105-141 (1850), especially pp. 139-141.

At least one Southern Presbyterian warned against making the slaves think that the only concern of the Christian minister was to make them more fruitful slaves: "Teach them what Paul directed slaves to do & be--but beware of pressing these duties too strongly & frequently, lest you beget the fatal suspicion that you are but enacting a selfish scheme of white men to make them better slaves, rather than to make them Christ's freemen. If they suspect this, you labour in vain," Henry Ruffner to William S. Plumer, MS letter, June 17, 1834. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society. Generalizations are difficult concerning the content of Southern Presbyterian teaching and instruction to slaves. There was some degree of emphasis on obedience and submission toward one's master. The extensively-used catechism written for slaves by Charles Colcock Jones, for example, included sections on both the duties of slaves and the duties of masters; they were, however, only a small part of the overall catechism. Charles Colcock Jones, A Catechism, of Scripture Doctrine and Practice, for Families and Sabbath Schools Designed also for the Oral Instruction of Colored Persons. (Savannah: John M. Cooper, 1837), pp. 127-131. More blatant in its concentration on slave obedience was a series of "Scripture Sketches for Colored Persons" which were printed anonymously in the Charleston Observer. The series consisted of stories of the lives of notable servants recorded in the Bible, showing their obedience and trustworthiness. They were designed to be read by masters to their servants. Charleston Observer, June 29, July 6, July 27, August 3, August 10, August 17, August 24, and August 31, 1833. On the other hand, the extensive collection of sermons by Isaac Naff at Montreat contains numerous sermons given to slave congregations; in every instance they were identical with the sermons preached to his white congregation, and contain no reference to the subservient position of slaves. The popular notion that Southern preaching to blacks consisted always of exhortations to obedience has no foundation, at least among Southern Presbyterians. There was frequently a strong emphasis on doctrinal content.

Southern Presbyterians sought to show that religious instruction would also result in fewer slave insurrections, since slaves who had been taught the proper, Scriptural, doctrine of the relationship of master and slave would not be rebellious. A Presbyterian newspaper in Georgia, for example, stated:

> Without fear of contradiction, I assert, that it has been owing to the timely discoveries of Christian slaves, that the lives of whole neighbourhoods have been preserved, when rebellions have been raised; and that every rebellion in the southern states that has ever been made known has been discovered by those whose consciences were enlightened by the Gospel....it is our duty to teach them the word of God--it is for our safety to do this....[1]

Shortly after the Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia, the editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph voiced a conviction that such rebellions would only be avoided by religious instruction:

> The remedy--the only preventive of the evils of fanaticism, and of the crimes for which it inspires its subjects, is SOUND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. The knowledge of the truths, principles and sanctions of religion as taught in the Bible....is a sovereign remedy against fanaticism and all its horrors--and as we believe, the only effectual one.[2]

There was also another, slightly different, aspect to the cultural motives which led to slave missions. This became evident only after the rise of a strong anti-slavery movement in the North, and consisted in the desire to pursue slave missions as an explicit answer to abolitionist accusations against the South and the institution of slavery. Typical was the statement of the Southern Presbyterian:

> The South owes itself a duty, owes it also to the

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[1] Missionary, April 22, 1822. On occasion slave insurrections were led by slaves who were professing Christians; the best known example was Nat Turner. For another example of such a slave see Rachael Blanding (Camden, South Carolina) to "Cousin," MS letter, July 25, 1816. Blanding Papers, University of South Carolina. Charles Colcock Jones acknowledged that such was the case on occasion, but claimed that true religious teaching would have the opposite effect. C.C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 212-216.

[2] Southern Religious Telegraph, October 7, 1831.

> other parts of our country, and to the world, to vindicate itself against the reckless charges commonly made and believed, that the gospel is withheld from the slave, and that his state of servitude "has degraded him below the brutes."[1]

This same idea was echoed by the Synod of Mississippi, in its annual "Narrative of the State of Religion":

> It is with special pleasure that we have heard of the increased and increasing attention to the religious and doctrinal instruction of children and servants. In the former, we have a blessed assurance that our Church will, in future, escape from troubles similar to those through which she has recently been called to pass; and, in the latter, the most effectual answer to all the objections made to our southern institutions.[2]

A letter to the Charleston Observer, written by "an extensive slaveholder," felt that religious instruction would also prevent further Northern interference in Southern domestic affairs. Discussing a proposed union of churches to undertake religious instruction, he noted:

> What do you think of the propriety of recommending the measure as an antidote to Northern incendiary efforts? I believe it one of the most efficient that can be employed....To the dispassionate Christians of the North, it would present a grand reason for non-interference while it would afford them an object on which they could cordially sympathize with their Southern brethren.[3]

The interplay of religious and cultural motives is seen clearly in the relationship between Southern Presbyterian interest in slave missions and certain secular events. There was interest to a greater or lesser degree in the religious instruction of the slaves during the entire period we are discussing. However, a survey of the period shows that there were two periods of special interest and activity. The first of these periods began about 1830 or 1831 and continued for several years, ending about 1835. The second period is

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, June 17, 1852. See also the issue of May 15, 1851.

[2] Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi for 1839, printed, p. 26.

[3] Charleston Observer, September 26, 1835.

more difficult to pinpoint, but began about 1842 and continued until the beginning of the Civil War.

During the first period Southern Presbyterian interest in slave missions was dominated by cultural motives, although the religious factor should not be discounted. It seems clear that the events of the early 1830's, particularly the Nat Turner insurrection and the rise of militant abolitionism, gave a powerful impetus to Southern Presbyterian efforts among slaves. Comments by Southern Presbyterians during this time admitted that slave missions had been neglected in the past, but spoke optimistically of the new interest in such work. Typical was the comment of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia in its annual "Narrative of the State of Religion":

> All along our sea-coast, much feeling has been awakened in reference to our colored population, & inquiries have been instituted with the view of ascertaining the best means of furnishing them with religious instruction. Hitherto it has been almost entirely neglected...the result of experience upon this plan, so far as it has been adopted, is favorable both to the interest of the planters, & the morals of the slaves.[1]

A few weeks later a letter to the Charleston Observer likewise took notice of the new interest, and related it directly to the South's fear of slave insurrections:

> It is gratifying, Mr. Editor, to see a growing attention in this, and other sections of the country, to the duty and importance of imparting religious instruction to our slaves. The propriety and expediency of this measure ought not to be questioned by any man of reflection. Our own happiness, the happiness of our negroes, and the welfare of our country, are deeply involved in it.... Only a few months ago, and our whole community was painfully excited for the safety of the country, originating from what we then saw, to be the precarious nature of the relation existing between ourselves and our slaves.... And where shall we find a preventive?...It calls for something that will extinguish the flame of discontent, and render the negro more happy and contented in existing

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[1]Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, p. 305 (December, 1831).

> circumstances. And what is so eminently calculated to effect this, as the principles of the Christian religion deeply and graciously impressed upon his heart?[1]

The Synod of North Carolina was less direct, but the connection between secular events and religious instruction was nevertheless clear. The Synod passed a series of three resolutions after learning "that certain incendiary publications, on the subject of slavery, have been circulated within their bounds"; the first two condemned abolitionist literature, while the third spoke of religious instruction:

> Resolved....3. That, under the existing laws of the State, Synod recommend to the ministers & churches under their care, to take all proper measures for the oral instruction of our coloured population, in the principles & duties of the Christian religion; & that, at the same time, the Synod would discountenance all meetings of coloured people, in which there is not some respectable white persons present.[2]

During the next few years Southern Presbyteries and Synods passed a veritable flood of resolutions concerning slave missions. Almost every Presbytery and Synod took some type of action on the matter, usually in the form of resolutions exhorting churches and individuals to undertake missions among the slaves. Taking note of the various resolutions, the editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph commented:

> In view of these...it is confidently hoped that the day has come when many Christians, laymen as well as ministers, will engage earnestly in this work, as those who know that slaves, like other men, have souls which are immortal....[3]

Southern Presbyterian newspapers also expressed concern about slave missions and frequently printed suggestions concerning methods that might be employed. It was generally agreed that actual efforts among

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[1]Charleston Observer, February 4, 1832.

[2]Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Volume for 1831, pp. 25-26.

[3]Southern Religious Telegraph, May 9, 1834.

slaves were also increasing. The Synod of South Carolina and Georgia took note of the continued increase in activity in its 1833 "Narrative of the State of Religion":

> They rejoice to find that increasing attention is paid to it on the part of many who are largely interested as owners in this class of our population, & that there is an increasing disposition on their part to receive and invite instruction for these heathen in our land.[1]

A similar sentiment was expressed by the "Narrative of the State of Religion" of the Presbytery of East Hanover (Virginia), although it also hinted that little was being done in terms of actual labor:

> Deep feeling has been excited on the subject of instructing our colored population in the principles of Christianity....Recently, christians have waked up and begin (sic) to take measures for efficient action. The subject has been talked over and discussed in our Presbytery, and the impression is made generally that something must be done.[2]

By about 1835, however, the initial interest in slave missions had declined. Outside of South Carolina and Georgia, relatively little had been accomplished in the way of systematic efforts. By about 1835 it appears that many attempts which had been made throughout the South were meeting strong resistance, and in many cases were being abandoned. The major reason appears to have been the reaction of the South to growing abolitionism in the North, and the consequent resistance to anything which might upset the status quo. The Synod of South Carolina and Georgia took note of this, although contending that slave missions within the Synod had not been affected to any significant degree:

> The excitements, which, in almost every direction, have led to ultra doctrines & ultra measures on almost every

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, p. 375, (December, 1833).

[2] "State of Religion within the Bounds of East Hanover Presbytery," Southern Religious Telegraph, May 2, 1834.

> subject, have been less felt among us in all their blasting influence, than we had every reason to fear.... Even the Religious instruction of our Slave population, entirely suspended in some parts of the Country, through the lamented interference of the Abolition fanatics, has proceeded, with almost unabated diligence, and steadiness of purpose--through the length & breadth of our Synod.[1]

Thus it was that the secular forces which had given the initial impetus to a renewed interest in slave missions were likewise responsible for their subsequent decline.

Southern Presbyterian interest in the religious instruction of the slaves never was totally eclipsed, and by 1842 a renewed concern was evident. The reasons for this were varied, but the religious motives tended to prevail. The reason for the increase in interest, however, was apparently due in large part to a decline in Southern concern about abolitionism. By this time two things were apparent to many Southern slaveholders. The first was that the organized abolition effort in the North was not as big a threat as had been feared initially; the second was the awareness that the Presbyterian Church (Old School) generally was untainted by abolitionism. There was, therefore, a new readiness to accept the idea of missions to slaves on

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, Vol. 1, p. 448 (November, 1835). For a similar statement see the letter of Charles Colcock Jones, Charleston Observer, September 19, 1835. For a specific example of the effect of abolitionism on slave missions see the letter of resignation of a missionary to the slaves in the Presbytery of Hanover in 1835: "I commenced my work in fear and trembling; and yet not without hope that the prejudices which exist between your land and ours, should, after a time, at least, cease....That hope was beginning to be realized; the times have changed, and my hope is gone! A great excitement has sprung up; prejudices, before violent, have received fresh and mighty impulses; obstacles, scarcely visible a short time since, have now become mountains by the volcanic agitations of a rash and fiery fanaticism." Cortlandt Van Rensselaer to the Presbytery of West Hanover, October, 1835. Quoted in Maurice W. Armstrong, "Cortlandt Van Rensselaer: Progressive Conservative," Journal of Presbyterian History, Vol. 22, p. 221 (December, 1954). For a further letter identifying abolitionism as the cause of Southern opposition to religious instruction of slaves see Southern Religious Telegraph, October 10, 1834. See also our discussion on opposition by planters, supra., pp. 383-385.

the part of many planters. In reaction to these two generally-held--if vague--beliefs, Southern Presbyterians revived their concern in slave missions. A correspondent to the Watchman of the South took note of the new atmosphere in mid-1842:

> The efforts for instruction were for a time impeded by the violent proceedings of enthusiastic Abolitionists; but the benevolent and conscientious have resumed their work, and are going on, irrespective alike of the reproaches or applause of foreign fanatics.[1]

Less than a year later another writer also spoke of the potential for slave missions in light of the apparent decline of abolitionism:

> It is, in my view, one of the happiest effects of the abatement which every one must perceive to have taken place, of the excitement produced by the Abolitionists, that the religious community in the South can operate again with some degree of freedom in efforts for the spiritual welfare of the blacks.[2]

About the same time various Church judicatories were likewise taking notice of the new opportunities. The Synod of Virginia, for example, acknowledged that little work had been done until very recently:

> One of the most pleasing manifestations...is seen in the increased attention to the religious instruction of the colored population in our midst. That too little regard has been paid to this subject, all are aware; and we do rejoice that God is turning the attention of his people more particularly to this class of our population.[3]

Various other Synods also took note of an increasing interest in slave missions within their bounds.[4] A report by Presbyterians to an

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[1] Watchman of the South, July 21, 1842. See also another article by the same correspondent in the issue of August 4, 1842.

[2] Ibid., April 20, 1843.

[3] "Narrative of the State of Religion in the Synod of Virginia," Watchman of the South, October 27, 1842.

[4] See, for example: Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi for 1842, printed, pp. 54-55; Minutes of the Synod of Alabama, MS, Vol. 1, p. 94 (January, 1843) and Vol. 1, p. 142 (October, 1844); "Narrative of the State of Religion, Synod of West Tennessee," Watchman of the South, November 23, 1843. Note also the General Assembly "Narrative of the State of Religion," GA Minutes (O.S.), 1843, p. 206; 1844, p. 398; 1845, p. 42-43. Numerous

interdenominational meeting in 1845 summarized the various efforts in the Church:

> The movement in this Church, in favour of the religious instruction of the negroes, for the last ten years, has been gradual, and for the two years past, rapid and extensive: More so than in any previous years within our recollection: and, as a consequence, ministers and churches are doing more than ever towards the evangelization of this people.[1]

Unlike the earlier period of interest in the early 1830's which lasted only briefly, the period of interest beginning about 1842 continued until the beginning of the Civil War.[2] It was during this period, also, that the major part of Southern Presbyterian activity among slaves took place.

THE METHODS OF SLAVE INSTRUCTION

The success of any mission undertaken among the slaves was dependent not only on strong motives, but on the development of methods which would be effective in light of the unique circumstances of the slaves. Consequently, Southern Presbyterians developed a number of methods for slave missions, although no single method came to predominate.

Two general considerations had to be weighed in evaluating possible methods for slave missions. The first was that any method must take into account the low educational level of the slave. This implied first of all, in the view of many, that emphasis should be placed on

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Presbytery narratives and resolutions at this time also reflect the increase in interest.

[1] Proceedings of the Meeting in Charleston, S.C., May 13-15, 1845, on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes, Together with the Report of the Committee, and the Address to the Public, (Charleston: B. Jenkins, 1845), p. 70. Benjamin Gildersleeve and Charles Colcock Jones were leading participants in the meeting. Note also the similar statement by Charles Colcock Jones, 13th Annual Report (1848), p. 57.

[2] In 1860, for example, the Presbytery of the Western District could report, "There is an observable advance in our work among this people." Minutes of the Presbytery of the Western District, MS, Vol. 2, p. 89 (April, 1860).

instruction which did not necessitate the ability to read on the part of the slaves. The Presbytery of South Alabama, for example, appointed a committee to consider the question of the religious instruction of slaves; the committee recommended "the plan of Oral Instruction, as the only & perhaps the best, that can at present be adopted."[1] Two years later the same Presbytery urged its churches

> To organise classes when convenient to comprise several families for more extended oral instruction and especially that concerted efforts be made to provide the means of employing missionaries to give oral religious instruction to the colored population....[2]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, Vol. 3, p. 162 (October, 1832).

[2] Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 104-105. The question of whether or not slaves should be taught to read was hotly debated from time to time. Before the passing of laws by many Southern states forbidding the teaching of reading to slaves, it was not uncommon for pastors to include the teaching of reading as part of their outreach toward slaves. For an example see John Holt Rice to Ashbel Green, MS letter, November 12, 1810. Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The Synod of the Carolinas in 1796 urged its members to teach slave children to read: "Synod...did order their members, and all heads of families under their care who are possessed of slaves, to be careful to give, not only such verbal instruction to those of mature age as their circumstances will admit; but that they also teach the children to read the Scriptures so as to be able to receive instructions from them...." Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas, Vol. 1, p. 197 (November, 1796).

As time went on it became increasingly difficult to teach slaves to read, both because of legal restrictions and popular opinion. The Society of Missionary Inquiry at Union Theological Seminary (Virginia) investigated the whole question of slave missions, and strongly opposed teaching slaves to read. Such an action would be dangerous: "...if a slave can read, he has access to all that is printed and published on those subjects which so nearly concern himself: and who, in this country, would wish his negroes to read what is every day issuing from the press on these subjects?" The Society further felt that reading would lead to the ability to write, and slaves could then use the postal service to formulate a united insurrection. Southern Religious Telegraph, January 22, 1831. The Society's suggestion brought sharp reaction from others who felt it was unjust to withhold the Bible from slaves. For the course of the debate see Southern Religious Telegraph, January 29, February 19, March 11, March 18, April 8, and April 15, 1831. Two years later the Society again spoke on the subject and reiterated its conviction that slaves should not be taught to read. It is a striking commentary on the change that had taken place after the Nat Turner insurrection that not one correspondent objected to this later report. Southern Religious Telegraph, September 27, 1833. Several years later,

The low educational level of the slaves meant also that those who dealt with them should attempt to make their material as simple as possible. Charles Colcock Jones remarked:

> I do not attempt to carry technicalities--so to speak--into the pulpit; nor speak of Arminian & Antinomian systems &c. I try to preach the pure doctrines--& show how they are opposed of wicked & deceived men. Ignorant people are not to be preached to as Theological students.[1]

Similar advice came from a writer in the Central Presbyterian:

> The language should be simple, and the sentences short, and easily comprehended. The truth should be explained and enforced by illustrations drawn from objects with which they are familiar. It was thus that Christ and his apostles preached....[2]

The second consideration concerning methods was that any method must be acceptable to society in general. This would imply first of all strict adherence to any legal requirements which might have been imposed by the various States. In addition, it would also imply a concerted effort to please the owners of the slaves with whom one was immediately concerned. In reviewing his efforts in Liberty County, Georgia, Charles Colcock Jones spoke of his attempts to avoid offense:

> The work was one of exceeding delicacy. A slight impropriety might ruin it, while on its success the spiritual welfare of multitudes might depend. The

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however, a correspondent to the Southern Christian Herald (South Carolina) urged that slaves be taught to read, since the Bible was not an unsafe book. The editor expressed his strong disapproval of this. Southern Christian Herald, May 18, 1838. Nevertheless, a few slaves seem to have been taught to read throughout the period; the Central Presbyterian in 1856 remarked, "Not a few of our servants possess, and are able to read, though not very accurately, either the whole Bible or the New Testament. In many cases this precious book is the gift of the master." Central Presbyterian, March 8, 1856.

[1]Charles Colcock Jones to John McLees, MS letter, August 21, 1846. John McLees Papers, University of South Carolina. An extended account of Jones' views are given by him in Religious Instruction, pp. 250-262.

[2]Central Presbyterian, March 8, 1856.

> public mind was sensitive and tender....I laid down the following rules of action, which I have ever since endeavored to observe faithfully:
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> 1. To visit no plantation without permission, and when permitted, never without previous notice.
>
> 2. To have nothing to do with the civil condition of the Negroes, or with their plantation affairs.
>
> 3. To hear no tales respecting their owners, or drivers, or work, and to keep within my own breast whatever of a private nature, might incidently come to my knowledge....
>
> 9. To support in the fullest manner the peace and order of society, and to hold up to their respect and obedience all those whom God in his providence has placed in authority over them.[1]

Keeping these considerations in mind, Southern Presbyterians sought to develop the best methods for reaching the slave population. In general, these methods can be classified into two categories. The first involved those methods which were centered in the individual efforts of members of the Church. The second category involved the efforts of the Church as a corporate body, or at least the efforts of the pastor with the support of his people.

The individual efforts of Southern Presbyterians largely centered in attempts to instruct slaves within one's own household, rather than making any attempt to reach a larger group of slaves. This type of household instruction might involve the inclusion of slaves in family worship. A correspondent of the Southern Religious Telegraph declared:

> If it be your duty to worship God in your family, if it be the duty of your wife, your children, and some of your domestics--it is the duty of every member of your family, and it is your duty to be "careful that all the members of your household duly attend." If this last remark be true, it follows of course, that it also becomes your duty to make such arrangements as to render it proper and agreeable for all your servants to attend; and that if you do not make such arrangements, the guilt of their omission is transferred to your head.[2]

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[1] C.C. Jones, 10th Annual Report (1844), pp. 16-18.

[2] Southern Religious Telegraph, August 2, 1833. See also the issue of

Southern Presbyterian judicatories also encouraged household instruction. The Presbytery of West Hanover, for example, addressed a pastoral letter to all families under its care, urging them to include their slaves in family worship and religious instruction:

> A man's servants unquestionably form a part of his household....Besides embracing every favorable opportunity of conversing with your servants severally on their prospects for eternity, let them all be collected at stated seasons for worship and instruction....On every such occasion, let some short portion of Scripture be read....This should immediately be followed by a conversation, in which what has been read should be commented on in a manner adapted to fix the attention, and please the imagination. Let questions be addressed to the servants suited to elicit a free expression of their ideas....Let these exercises uniformly be preceded and followed by prayer, and if practicable, by singing.[1]

The extent to which such exhortations had a practical effect is difficult to determine. There were undoubtedly many families which did little or nothing about including slaves in any type of family worship. On the other hand, some examples of thorough efforts can be found. The family of Benjamin Mosby Smith was exemplary in this regard:

> The members of the household, including the house servants, gathered about the family altar morning and evening. On these occasions there was a simple service consisting of the reading of a chapter from the Bible, the singing of a familiar hymn, and a prayer....Most of them were taught to read and many to write. On Sunday nights a Bible class for them was held in the basement of the residence....On week nights there were prayer meetings and Bible readings under the superintendence of one of the older women

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August 16, 1833. For other representative comments see Charleston Observer, August 13, 1831, and Southern Presbyterian, March 29, 1848.

[1]"A Pastoral Letter of West Hanover Presbytery to the Members of the Churches under their care," Watchman of the South, February 29, 1844. For further representative statements from Church judicatories see Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, Vol. 3, pp. 103-105 (September, 1834); Minutes of the Presbytery of the Western District, reprinted in Watchman of the South, October 22, 1844; and Minutes of the Synod of Alabama, MS, Vol. 1, pp. 170-171 (October, 1845). For an action by a Church session see Watchman of the South, February 24, 1842.

slaves.[1]

There were at least three difficulties, however, in entrusting the religious instruction of slaves into the hands of the owners only. The first was the fact that such a scheme was usually not feasible on a larger plantation, since it was not possible to gather a number of field hands together for worship with the family. A second difficulty centered around the fact that such endeavors, even if successful, did nothing to reach the slaves of owners who had little or no contact with the Church. The final problem was that many families were not able or willing to undertake such efforts; it is not unusual to find instances of ministers who met with their slaves for family worship, but examples of ordinary laymen who undertook such work are rarer.

Southern Presbyterians sought to remedy this last difficulty by providing printed materials which were designed to be used by masters in giving religious instruction to slaves. Several catechisms were written specifically for use with slaves; in general, they sought to give a comprehensive review of doctrine, but the answers were usually very brief.[2] While used frequently by ministers, they were also designed for the use of masters in teaching their own slaves. The Southern Presbyterian carried a series of "Plantation Sermons"

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[1] F. R. Flourney, op. cit., p. 2.

[2] The best known was the catechism of Charles Colcock Jones, to which reference has been made (supra, p. 393.) The Synod of Mississippi also spent considerable time working on a catechism for slave instruction, and eventually published it in 1845. Minutes of the Synod of Mississippi, printed, 1839, p. 26; 1840, pp. 30, 36; 1841, p. 47; 1842, p. 56; 1844, p. 75; 1845, p. 82. It is not known if a copy of the catechism is extant. The editor of the Southern Presbyterian took note of a Baptist catechism for slaves in which all the answers were either 'yes' or 'no,' and hinted that the Presbyterians might profit from this example; no attempt was apparently made, however, to reach this degree of simplicity. Southern Presbyterian, September 20, 1848. On the other hand, the Charleston Observer (July 12, 1828) noted in one Presbyterian Church that many slaves had learned the Shorter Catechism.

designed to be read by a master to his slaves; they were later reprinted in two volumes.[1] The Charleston Observer published a series of sketches of servants of the Bible, designed to be read by masters to slaves.[2] The same newspaper also printed a series on the "Ten Commandments for Coloreds," again for the use of masters in giving religious instruction.[3] The Charleston Observer also published a series of hymns selected by Charles Colcock Jones which were specifically suggested for the use of slaves.[4]

The various difficulties involved in household instruction meant that the task could not be left simply in the hands of masters, no matter how devoted they might be. It was, therefore, necessary to develop methods which were centered in the Church, rather than the individual member.

Since the time of Samuel Davies a major part of the Church's work among slaves had included allowing them to attend the regular worship services on Sunday.[5] This pattern continued throughout the period before the Civil War. Slaves furthermore were admitted as communicant members of the Church upon examination of their belief and

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[1]We have not had access to a complete file of the Southern Presbyterian; they appeared regularly in 1854 and 1855. The sermons were reprinted later: A. F. Dickson, Plantation Sermons, or Plain and Familiar Discourses for the Instruction of the Unlearned, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1856) and A. F. Dickson, Lessons About Salvation; from the Life and Words of the Lord Jesus. Being a Second Series of Plantation Sermons. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1860).

[2]Charleston Observer, June 29, July 6, July 27, August 3, August 10, August 17, August 24, and August 31, 1833.

[3]Ibid., January 25, February 1, February 8, February 15, February 22, March 1, March 8, March 15, March 22, and March 29, 1834.

[4]Charleston Observer, August 8, August 22, and August 29, 1840.

[5]Supra, p. 5.

manner of living.[1] Some churches, notably in South Carolina, had more black members than white members.[2] Southern Presbyterian newspapers frequently spoke of the participation of blacks in various revivals.[3] In many churches a separate balcony or gallery was constructed specifically for the use of slaves, sometimes with a separate outside stairway. In other churches slaves were allotted a separate area of the main floor for seating.[4]

As interest in slave missions increased, it was generally agreed that simply allowing slaves to attend regular worship services was not sufficient, even when special provisions had been made for their accommodation. Accordingly, new procedures were developed for reaching the slave population.

The most frequent method for religious instruction was the holding of some type of special meeting on Sunday afternoons, specifically designed for the slaves of the white members. These meetings were generally of two types. The first consisted of a regular preaching service on Sunday afternoon. The Synod of Memphis, for example, reported

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[1] Usually a slave was expected to bring a letter from his master, attesting to his moral character and giving him permission to join the Church.

[2] In 1860 the Presbytery of Harmony reported 1743 black members out of a total of 3984 communicants; the Presbytery of Charleston reported 1880 black members out of a total of 3078 communicants. GA Minutes (O.S.), 1860, pp. 229-231. In the Presbytery of Harmony the largest church, Salem, reported 454 members, of whom 382 were black; in the Presbytery of Charleston the largest church (John's Island and Wadmalaw) consisted of 570 members, of whom 510 were black. Ultimate control in such churches was always in the hands of the white members.

[3] See, for example, Visitor and Telegraph, January 10, 1829; Charleston Observer, February 10, 1827; December 25, 1830; May 14, August 27, September 17, October 1 and October 22, 1831; January 7, 1843.

[4] For an excellent account of the place of slave members in one larger Southern Presbyterian Church, see Thomas H. Spence, Jr., The Presbyterian Congregation on Rocky River (Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press Inc., 1954), pp. 88-104. Rocky River Church was in North Carolina, and in the 1850's slaves constituted about one-third of the members.

that most ministers were active in such efforts;

> It is the general and perhaps the universal practice of the ministers of the Synod to preach specially and statedly to the black people wherever a congregation can be obtained in addition to the provision that is usually made for them, in preaching to the whites, by appropriating a part of the church to their use.[1]

The Presbytery of Tuskaloosa reported that "for the most part services for them are well attended and have been followed by decidedly favorable results."[2] The Presbytery of South Alabama indicated that about one-half of its churches had Sunday afternoon services.[3] One minister in South Carolina reported that most of the white members stayed for his afternoon service, as well as a large number of slaves.[4] On occasion meetings of various Presbyteries included a special service for blacks.[5]

The other type of special Sunday service took as its model the common Sunday school concept. As early as 1811 a Presbyterian in Lexington, Virginia, reported that blacks were active in a new Sunday school:

> Sunday is becoming a new day in Lexington. A Sunday School has been organized, which is attended astonishingly. Upwards of sixty whites & seventy blacks attended, & the number is likely to increase considerably.[6]

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Memphis, MS, Vol. 1, pp. 171-172, (October, 1853).

[2] Minutes of the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa, MS, Vol. 3, p. 110 (September, 1852).

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, Vol. 9, p. 34 (November, 1859).

[4] John McLees Diary, MS, entry for January 11, 1844. John McLees Papers, University of South Carolina. For other representative examples see H. M. White, op. cit., p. 138 and Thomas Cary Johnson, The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906), pp. 188-189.

[5] For examples see Watchman and Observer, May 21, 1846, and Southern Presbyterian, May 25, 1849.

[6] Samuel Graham to William Graham, MS letter, December 12, 1811. Samuel Graham Papers, Duke University.

Seven years later the Synod of Virginia noted that Sunday Schools intended for the exclusive use of the blacks were active;

> ...Schools for the unhappy, degraded Africans have been in operation & under the smiles of the King of Zion have done & are doing and we trust will do their wonders among us.[1]

The same year a pastor in North Carolina stated, "There is a Sunday School at almost every Church, in which black people are taught to read."[2] A similar report came from Tennessee:

> When the establishment of Sabbath schools was first proposed, and some exertions were made to bring them into operation, a considerable reluctance to the admission of the poor fettered slave to the privilege of learning to read the word of God, was manifested in this quarter. Now the Sabbath schools are almost every where crowded with poor blacks; many of whom make greater progress in learning by one day's attention, than many whites by attending school the whole week.[3]

Ten years later the Presbytery of Concord reported that three Sunday Schools were firmly established for the slaves in their area, and that in one of these the slaves were being taught to read.[4] The renewal

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[1] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 4, p. 222 (October, 1818).

[2] "Extract of a letter from the Rev. Samuel C. Caldwell, in Mecklinburgh County, N.C., dated September 22, 1818," The Religious Intelligencer (New Haven, Conn.), Vol. 3, p. 377 (1818).

[3] "Extract of a letter from the Rev. Andrew S. Morrison, in Blount County, Tennessee, to the Editor of the Weekly Recorder, dated August 6th, 1818," Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 252 (1818). For an example of the work of a Southern Presbyterian using the medium of a Sunday School in Tennessee see the diary of Rev. Anthony Pearson, MS, Montreat. Pearson was from South Carolina but spent several years in eastern Tennessee. He inquired about the propriety of working with a black Sunday school: "Learned it was not contrary to the laws of the State, and was encouraged to undertake it...." (May 22, 1831). In the course of his work he read to the slaves all New Testament passages dealing with the duties of slaves to masters (September 18, 1831), and endeavored to use pictures to illustrate his messages to them (December 11,1831). He also thought that a series of tracts ought to be written about the duties of masters and servants for use in the school (October 12, 1831). There is no indication that the school made any effort to teach slaves to read; at this later date it would have been unlikely.

[4] "Narrative of the State of Religion, Concord Presbytery," Charleston Observer, May 17, 1828.

of interest in slave missions after 1830 led to increased efforts to establish Sunday schools for slaves; this was especially evident after the revival of interest in the early 1840's. The Presbytery of Winchester (Virginia) urged:

> Resolved that it be earnestly recommended to ministers, sessions and private Christians, within our bounds, to establish and maintain Sabbath Schools for the catechetical instruction of the coloured people; and that Jones' Catechism, be recommended, as a little work admirably fitted for the use of such schools.[1]

By 1841 the Presbytery of Harmony could report:

> The colored population besides the opportunity afforded them of attending on the gospel preached to the white congregation, have generally received Special Instruction every Sabbath by catechising, and a simple style of preaching adapted to their capacities. Only five churches report that they have not attended to this matter, and in each of them the number of colored hearers is very small.[2]

As indicated in this quotation, a major part of the time in this type of Sunday school was given over catechetical instruction. Perhaps typical was the work of a pastor in Virginia:

> I mentioned that successful experiments in instructing the blacks by catechising, had been made in this neighborhood. I have been trying it for some time, as I believe I told you last summer. And I have now under my care two Classes, which I catechize on the Sabbath embracing about 25 scholars, in both....We have used Jones's Catechism, most of which the class have learnt very thoroughly, besides many texts of Scripture on various subjects, some Scripture narratives & many hymns. Their progress has been encouraging beyond all expectations....The Rev. S. L. Graham told me of an interesting revival of religion & the hopeful conversion of a number of servants in a family in Mecklenburg (Mr. Daniel's) where this course of instruction, or one similar had been pursued.[3]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Winchester, MS, Vol. 9, p. 152, (April, 1845).

[2] "Narrative of the State of Religion in the Synod," Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 2, p. 139 (November, 1841).

[3] G. W. Leyburn to William S. Plumer, MS letter, January 30, 1835. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society. For another example of a black Sunday school see H. M. White, op. cit., pp. 156-159. In White's Church the black Sunday school was under the direction of Thomas

While Southern Presbyterians often encouraged the establishment of separate preaching sessions and Sunday schools for slaves, there was little inclination toward establishing separate churches for their use. The Presbytery of Hopewell reported in 1827 that a separate church had been constructed in Athens, Georgia, for the use of slaves; it was not, strictly speaking, a Presbyterian effort, however, and it was virtually unique during that time.[1] Little advantage would be gained by completely separate buildings, it was felt, and such places could provide dangerous meeting points for slaves, if not properly supervised.[2]

In the mid-1840's a change in sentiment concerning separate churches was evident among Presbyterians in South Carolina, particularly in Charleston. The main impetus for this came from the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston under the leadership of its pastor, Dr. Thomas Smyth. In the Spring of 1846 a powerful revival had swept Smyth's Church; in the early months of 1846 one-hundred and six members had been added

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J. Jackson, who would win fame later as a Civil War general("Stonewall" Jackson). Jackson gave a monthly report on each pupil's progress to the owner of the slave. See also the diary of R. E. Sherrill, MS, for other notations concerning work done in a black Sunday school. The diary is dated 1854. R. E. Sherrill Papers, Montreat.

[1]"A comfortable house of worship for their exclusive service is now erecting in the town of Athens and the ministers of the Gospel of various denominations there and in the neighbourhood have promised to devote a part of their time to their instruction." "Narrative of the State of Religion, Hopewell Presbytery," Charleston Observer, June 30, 1827. In Virginia the editor of the Visitor and Telegraph suggested in 1828 that the solution to the lack of religious instruction of slaves might be the construction of separate churches in which a white minister would feel free to adapt his preaching to the slaves' level of understanding. Visitor and Telegraph, March 3, 1828.

[2]The exception to this was the building of chapels on plantations for the use of the slaves. These were usually supplied by white ministers, and were erected specifically for their use. The annual reports of Charles Colcock Jones indiate that he was able to persuade several plantations owners to build chapels, which he would use during his visits to the plantations. In Louisiana, John McDonogh erected a chapel on his plantation, which he supplied himself if a minister were not available. See G. Lewis, op. cit., p. 206.

to the Church.[1] An immediate result of this was the formation of a new Church, the Glebe Street Presbyterian Church, from members of Smyth's congregation.[2] At the same time the congregation of Second Church turned its attention more specifically to its black members. It was decided to hire a minister with the assignment of working only with the black members of the Church, and with the idea of eventually constructing a separate building for their use. A committee of the Presbytery of Charleston was formed to investigate the proposal, and reported that such a project would be of great benefit, not only to the slaves but to the Southern Church generally:

> This Class of the Community...seem to be a sacred trust which is to prove the faith, the Charity, the self denial and spiritual zeal of the Southern Church: and the most effective answer which can be given to the calumnies of Abolitionists and misguided Philanthropists will be persevering diligence in training this people for glory honour and immortality.[3]

At the same time, the Presbytery also passed a resolution urging any separate Church to be under the immediate jurisdiction of a white Church:

> ...while the Presbytery recommends the formation of Separate coloured congregations, it is not prepared to advise that they be organized into separate Churches but rather that they be placed under the discipline and spiritual jurisdiction of Existing Sessions, or treated as Missionary Churches under the care of an Evangelist.[4]

John B. Adger, a former missionary to Armenia and a Member of a prominent Charleston family, was appointed minister to the blacks by the Second Presbyterian Church.[5] Funds for Adger's support came

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[1] Smyth, Works, Vol. 6, pp. 33-26.

[2] Smyth, Notes, p. 194.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of Charleston, MS, Vol. 1, p. 496.

[4] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 429 (April, 1847).

[5] Adger had been in Armenia under the American Board of Commissioners

mainly from members of his own family, but the Church undertook to raise funds for the erection of a separate Church.[1] Adger began his work by meeting in the basement of the Second Church; in addition to a regular preaching session he had a large Sunday school taught by white instructors.[2] The construction of the separate church building was completed at a cost of $7,500, and formally dedicated on May 26, 1850. The dedication sermon was preached by the Southern Church's leading theologian, James Henley Thornwell, on "The Christian Doctrine of Slavery."[3]

It is logical to inquire about the motives which led to the establishment of the Anson Street Church. The stated motive for the erection of the separate building was strictly religious. Adger contended that the question of separate congregations was essentially pragmatic in nature; religious instruction of the blacks could best take place by this means.[4] This was amplified by Thornwell:

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for Foreign Missions. There were various factors involved in his decision not to return to Armenia, but among the major reasons was the fact that his family's involvement with slavery had produced an outcry in the ABCFM.

Adger's appointment was passed by the Church Session, and then approved by a congregational meeting, which also resolved to raise funds for a separate building. For the congregational resolutions see Watchman and Observer, June 3, 1847. Adger preached a lengthy sermon on the occasion which defended the idea of slave missions. The sermon was summarized in the Watchman and Observer, July 29, 1847, and was also favorably reviewed by James Henley Thornwell in the Southern Presbyterian Review, September, 1847, pp. 137-150.

[1]John B. Adger, My Life and Times, 1810-1899. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), pp. 165-166.

[2]Ibid., p. 174.

[3]The cost of the building is given in George A. Blackburn, ed., The Life Work of John L. Girardeau, D.D., LL.D. (Columbia, S.C.: The State Company, 1916), p. 74. Hereafter referred to as Girardeau, Life. The sermon was widely reprinted, and was one of the most closely reasoned statements on slavery by a Southern Presbyterian. It can be found in Thornwell, Works, Vol. 4, pp. 398-436.

[4]Adger, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

> If, then, the slaves are to be taught at all, and permitted to fulfill the whole circle of Christian duty, they must be collected into congregations. Now, there are but two conceivable ways in which this can be done. They must either have separate Assemblies of their own, or they must worship in company with their masters.[1]

Thornwell then went on to say that the latter alternative was not effective, since there was not room in the white churches for all the slaves, and the content of the average sermon directed at a white audience was beyond the grasp of the slave. Churches which held separate Sunday afternoon services for slaves were merely proving the point that separate congregations were better. Since many churches already had separate sessions for their slave members, there should be no objection, Thornwell felt, to erecting a separate building, as long as proper safeguards were instituted which would guarantee white control. A separate building would make it more feasible for the preacher to deal with his congregation.[2]

Adger continued as pastor of the Anson Street Church until forced to resign for health reasons in 1852. After a brief period under the ministry of Rev. Ferdinand Jacobs, the Church secured John L. Girardeau as pastor, "one of the most eloquent ministers that the Southern Presbyterian Church has produced."[3] During Adger's period

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[1] Southern Presbyterian Review, p. 142.

[2] Ibid., pp. 143-145. It could be asked whether or not the establishment of a separate congregation had as its root cause a racism which desired complete segregation. This is no where hinted, and many members of Second Church were active in the day-to-day activities of the Anson Street congregation. In 1858 the Anson Street Church, which by then was a separate congregation with no official connection with the Second Church, began to admit white members. A number of white members left Smyth's congregation and became members of the Anson Street Church. Interesting insight on this phase is found in J.L. Kirkpatrick to A.A. Porter, MS letter, June 15, 1858. Abner Porter Papers, Montreat. Kirkpatrick was pastor of the Blebe Street Church at the time, and was clearly fearful of losing members to the Anson Street Church; he opposed the reception of white members into the Anson Street congregation.

[3] E.T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 442.

at Anson Street Church the Church was considered a branch congregation of the Second Church; members of the Church were considered as members of the Second Church. Leadership in the congregation was likewise supplied by members of Second Church. In 1854, shortly after Girardeau came to the Church, the Presbytery of Charleston approved a plan making the Anson Street Church a separate missionary effort of the Presbytery, and appointed a committee

> to gather & organize a Church of white Members, with its eldership, to worship at said Anson St. Church, and to which the present coloured Membership there worshipping may be united.[1]

By 1858 enough white members had joined the Church so that the Presbytery could organize it as a separate congregation, which was accomplished in late 1858.[2] Under Girardeau the Church had experienced much growth, and in early 1859 a new building was dedicated. It cost $25,000 and was the largest church building in Charleston; it was renamed the Zion Presbyterian Church.[3]

Girardeau kept the Church under white leadership in many aspects; no meeting could be held without the presence of a white person, and all instruction was in the hands of competent white teachers. On the other hand, Girardeau--perhaps drawing on the Scottish parish system, especially as developed by Thomas Chalmers at St. John's Church in Glasgow--carefully organized the Church along parish lines.[4]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Charleston, MS, Vol. 2, p. 104 (November, 1854).

[2] Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 212-213.

[3] Southern Presbyterian, April 9, 1859.

[4] The suggestion of a connection is made by Erskine Clarke, op. cit., pp. 187-188. There is no direct statement of Girardeau's making the identification, but the similarities are such that some connection is probable. It should be recalled that Thomas Smyth was a great admirer of Chalmers, and had visited the slums of Edinburgh with Chalmers during a visit to Scotland. See Smyth, Notes, p. 218. For Chalmers' work of poor relief in Glasgow see Hanna, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 302-322.

Each black communicant was assigned to a "class," consisting normally of no more than fifty members. Each class was under the jurisdiction of a black leader, who was to meet with his class weekly, visit the members, assist in taking care of the poor and sick, and in some instances bury the dead. Each class also had an assistant leader, and when the class became too big a new class would be formed, and the assistant leader would normally be promoted to the position of leader of the new class. The leaders were under the supervision of the Session, and met together periodically to report on their work. In cases of sickness or poverty each leader was authorized to inform the Deacons of the exact need, and help in the distribution of funds. A weekly collection was taken for the relief of the sick in the congregation; in addition, a collection was taken at each communion service for the poor fund.[1]

Girardeau also sought to prevent the white members from becoming the dominant factor in the Church, and thus moving the Church away from its original purpose. Each white member was required to sign a statement of "Declaration and Agreement" which bound him to work for the good of the black members:

> We declare that we enter this Church, as white members of the same, with the fullest understanding that its primary design and chief purpose is to benefit the coloured and especially the slave population of this city....Moreover...we do severally agree that, in event of our dissatisfaction with the order of things for which this declaration and agreement provides, we will rather withdraw from connection with the Church than attempt, by any influence on our part, to divert it from its orginal purpose as a church contemplating chiefly the benefit of

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[1]Details on the organization of the congregation are contained in the "Rules for the Government of the Coloured Members of Zion Presbyterian Church," reprinted in Girardeau, Life, pp. 84-96. Additional details about the Church and Girardeau's ministry can be found in the MS session records and roll books, Montreat, and in miscellaneous papers of Girardeau preserved in the Blackburn Collection, Reformed Theological Seminary.

the coloured population.[1]

Girardeau's work was very successful, and attracted considerable attention. At the end of 1860 the congregation had 462 black and 62 white members, but it was said that his normal Sunday congregation was 1,500 to 2,000.[2]

The experiment in Charleston, however, did not meet with the approval of everyone. At the beginning of the experiment John Adger found there was powerful opposition to the idea of a separate church; a series of letters in the Charleston Mercury, the leading newspaper, condemned the proposal, and several public meetings were called to deal with the question. Adger found support from some of the city's leading citizens, however, and the danger of suppression or even violence was eliminated. [3] The matter was always somewhat delicate, however. Girardeau recalled an occasion on which armed men came to a service threatening to kill him; a rumor had been circulated that he would preach against the recent hanging of a black member of his congregation who had been implicated (Girardeau felt unjustly) in a murder. The danger was averted when Girardeau made it clear that the only thing about which he wished to speak was the spiritual state of the condemned man.[4] Girardeau seems to have come under renewed attack after Harper's Ferry, but was able to continue the work.[5]

The history of the Anson Street and Zion Churches is of interest for several reasons. In the first place, it was the most thorough

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[1] Girardeau, Life, pp. 82-83.

[2] Ibid., p. 98.

[3] Adger, op. cit., pp. 172-174. For a summary of the Charleston Mercury letters and Adger's replies, see Southern Presbyterian Review, December, 1847, pp. 94-120.

[4] Girardeau, Life, pp. 101-103.

[5] Central Presbyterian, November 12, 1859.

attempt by Southern Presbyterians to carry out a mission to the slaves through the means of a separate church; it was, in fact, one of the most successful attempts to reach the slave population, regardless of method.

The other reason it is of special interest is because it was virtually unique among Southern Presbyterians. The experiment was hailed by Presbyterians in other parts of the South, but not emulated. Almost no other examples of separate churches among Presbyterians can be found, other than plantation chapels. The only one of note was a black church in Natchez, Mississippi.[1] In 1859 it reported a membership of 57; the following year apparently it received a large addition of white members, since it listed a total membership of 219, 108 of whom were black.[2] Perhaps the sentiment of most Southern Presbyterians concerning separate congregations for slaves was expressed by the Southern Presbyterian, which warmly supported the Charleston effort:

> The question of "separate" or "mixed" congregations must, we conceive, be decided by the condition of things--the facts--in each community--that is to say, whilst in no case do we think the blacks should be excluded, by design or through a failure to provide for their accommodation, from the worship of the whites, there may be and are cases when it is desirable that houses be erected, ministers employed, and services held, for the special, the well-nigh exclusive, use and benefit of the blacks....In the country, "separate churches" are not so necessary. Perhaps, as a general

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[1] A brief account can be found in the True Witness, September 24, 1857.

[2] G.A. Minutes, (O.S.), 1859, p. 727, and 1860, p. 240. The missionary was listed as Rev. Joseph Weeks.

The Presbytery of Harmony reported in 1847 that it hoped several buildings for slaves would be erected, but there is no indication that this was actually done. Minutes of the Presbytery of Harmony, MS, Vol. 2, p. 463 (April, 1847). The "Narrative of the State of Religion" for the Presbytery of Georgia in 1850 noted that funds were being raised for the erection of a separate church for slaves. It is not clear, however, whether it was exclusively a Presbyterian effort, nor is there any indication of the eventual outcome of the project. Southern Presbyterian, May 31, 1850.

thing, they are not desirable.[1]

Among those who gave thought to the matter it was clear that none of the methods mentioned so far would be completely effective in reaching the vast slave population of the South. The remaining method which was widely discussed and in some notable instances practiced was the employment of men who would specifically devote their full time to slave missions.

Three major problems stood in the way of any systematic effort to reach the slave population through special missionaries. In the first place, there was a problem of finding personnel who would be both willing and capable to undertake such work. A second problem was the practical one of finances, since the slave population could be expected to contribute virtually nothing to the support of such missions. Finally, since special missionaries would be working directly with slaveowners, it was necessary to overcome any opposition to their work if they were to receive permission to labor among the slaves. We shall examine each of these problems in turn, and the efforts made to grapple with them.

The problem of personnel involved first of all dealing with the fact that there was a shortage of ministers to supply existing congregations; how, then, could it be expected that enough men would be found to become missionaries to the slaves? Part of the solution, some felt, would be approving the assignment of laymen to undertake slave missions. The Presbytery of Orange appointed a committee to deal with the question of slave instruction; its report was as follows:

> Resolved, That every minister and licentiate of this Presbytery be earnestly requested to preach at least one sermon on each Sabbath, to the blacks and that they call to their aid in giving religious instruction, in conducting their meetings, and in watching over the

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[1] Southern Presbyterian, January 9, 1858.

> spiritual interests of the black Congregation, such intelligent, prudent and active laymen as they may need.[1]

Several weeks later the Synod of Virginia adopted an extended minute from the Presbytery of East Hanover. The Presbytery affirmed that they could "see no means by which they can send the gospel to these their fellow men...except by the establishment of a system of instruction by laymen."[2] The minute then noted that under Presbyterian polity men who lacked the proper educational background could not be ordained to such service. However, it was suggested that properly qualified laymen could be licensed by individual church sessions to undertake slave instruction; such action would successfully fulfill the need, and would also fulfill the recently-established legal stipulation of Virginia saying that any religious instructor for slaves must be approved by a recognized church body:

> The Presbytery believe that the licensure and general superintendence of such lay-instructors should be confided to church Sessions.
> Therefore Resolved that any church Session within our bounds, be and they hereby are authorized to license and appoint any suitable persons, either officers or members, to conduct religious worship for the benefit of Slaves or other coloured persons, & to communicate instruction in any way which the Constitution of our Church and the laws of the land do not prohibit.[3]

In spite of the apparent interest in the proposal, however, there is no indication that the resolution had any significant effect.[4]

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[1] Minutes of the Presbytery of Orange, MS, Vol. 2, p. 48 (September, 1832).

[2] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 6, p. 76 (October, 1832).

[3] Ibid., p. 77. See also a letter backing the proposal in the Southern Religious Telegraph, October 19, 1832.

[4] Two years later the Synod renewed the resolution in language which strongly suggested that no action had been taken. Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 6, p. 121.

For other expressions of approval for laymen undertaking slave missions see Watchman and Observer, February 12, 1846; Southern Presbyterian, August 23 and August 30, 1856; and John McDonogh to John H. Cocke, MS letter, March 20, 1846, John McDonogh Papers, Tulane University. There

It was felt by others that the need for missionaries sent specifically to the slaves would only be met by ordained men. Charles Colcock Jones stated:

> Nothing can take the place of competent, qualified ministers, or missionaries; men exclusively devoted to this work, who shall make it their life-time labour and their study, to whom adequate support must be given.[1]

Some suggested that slave missions, because of the uneducated nature of the slaves, did not require as highly polished preachers as most churches; the Southern Presbyterian suggested that neither the best nor the poorest preachers should be sent to the blacks.[2] From time to time there was talk about lowering the educational standards required for ordination in cases of men who were going to be missionaries to the slave population; the movement, however, never achieved popularity.[3] On the other hand, some of the most successful ministers to blacks were among the most gifted men in the Southern Church; John Holt Rice, John Adger, Charles Colcock Jones, and John Girardeau all were seminary professors at some time in their lives.

The second problem concerning the appointment of missionaries for the slaves--that of financial support--was never completely solved.

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are occasional notices of laymen who were very active in slave evangelism. An example was the work done in the Presbytery of South Alabama: "The Coloured people also have been attended to....The meetings have usually been conducted by the pastors of the churches, but when this cannot be done, the Elders & lay-members of the churches have been very successful in doing good in this department for christian labor--An interesting example is that of Elder James Sanford of Mobile, who by the blessing of God, has gathered a large & promising coloured church." Minutes of the Presbytery of South Alabama, MS, Vol. 7, pp. 273-274 (October, 1852).

[1]Charles Colcock Jones to William S. Plumer, MS letter, June 28, 1834. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society. See also Southern Religious Telegraph, February 21, 1834.

[2]Southern Presbyterian, July 5, 1856.

[3]Charleston Observer, January 11 and June 14, 1845.

There were in general four major approaches to the problem. The first suggestion was that missionaries should be employed by the General Assembly's Board of Domestic Missions. In the early decades of our period there were some examples of this, the most notable being the employment of John Chavis.[1] As time went on the Board became increasingly reluctant to do this, however. In 1844 the Presbytery of Georgia issued a memorial to other Southern Presbyteries urging that all slave missions be brought under the control of the General Assembly's Board.[2] The memorial drew widespread notice in the Southern Church. Many Presbyteries approved the plan; typical was a resolution from the Presbytery of East Alabama:

> Resolved...That we hail the prospect of securing the labours of proper missionaries amongst our coloured people through the Assembly's Board as an omen of good to this long neglected people whose spiritual welfare has been & continues to be retarded by the unwise & fanatical measures of Northern Abolitionists.[3]

Many, however, opposed the plan; a statement from the Presbytery of Winchester indicated the major objection:

> This instruction must be given by those who themselves hold God's saving truth, and these we believe are chiefly to be found in Great Britian (sic) and the United States....All our people deem it undesirable. many believe it unsafe. and if it is not now illegal it probably would soon be made so for associations or individuals in Great Britian or any other foreign countries or in the Northern States, to become the religious teachers of our coloured population. and if the law did not prohibit this public sentiment would effectually prevent it.[4]

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[1] Supra, p. 73.

[2] The text is not included in the minutes of the Presbytery; it may be found in Watchman of the South, August 22, 1844, and Charleston Observer, September 7, 1844.

[3] Minutes of the Presbytery of East Alabama, MS, Vol. 1, pp. 128-129. (October, 1844).

[4] Minutes of the Presbytery of Winchester, MS, Vol. 9, p. 166 (April, 1845).

The Presbytery of Georgia memorial possibly stimulated interest in slave missions in some Presbyteries; however, no action was taken by the Board of Domestic Missions to adopt the plan.

The second suggestion was that all slave missions should be placed under an agency specifically formed for that purpose by churches in the South. As early as 1834 a Presbyterian in Virginia had suggested that "such a measure would be most likely to secure patronage, and of course, the largest amount of funds."[1] The Synod of North Carolina debated the question fully, and urged several other Southern Synods to back the formation of a society for slave missions. The scheme was explicitly to be separated from any scheme of emancipation or colonization.[2] The North Carolina memorial was discussed by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, but no decision was reached.[3] Cortlandt Van Rensselaer was enthusiastic about the prospects of such a society:

> An organization like this would not only be easily formed and sustained,--and creat a homogeneous public opinion in the several States to supply immediate necessities--but it would bring before the community in a prominent way the moral interests of the slaves. This society would very soon be the absorbing society

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[1] Southern Religious Telegraph, March 21, 1834.

[2] For the reaction of a minister present at the Synod meeting see J.M. Brown to Francis McFarland, MS letter, October 15, 1834. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat. Brown indicates the nature of the memorial. The text of the memorial has apparently not been preserved; it was not included in the Synod minutes.

[3] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol 1, p. 397 (December, 1834). The Synod of North Carolina in 1835 stated that they considered it "inexpedient to prosecute any further, at present, the plan of organization adopted at the last meeting of Synod...." Minutes of the Synod of North Carolina, MS, Vol. 2, p. 343 (October, 1835). The Synod of Virginia in 1835 concurred with the Synod of North Carolina's judgment that further action was inexpedient. Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 6, pp. 135-136. The Synod of South Carolina and Georgia postponed the matter indefinitely. Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, MS, Vol. 1, p. 439 (November, 1835).

of the South.[1]

On the other hand, Charles Colcock Jones opposed the idea of an organization embracing several Synods; he felt each Synod should have responsibility over its own work:

> I have always had what appeared to my own mind substantial objections to so extensive an organization, though I would rather support such an organization than have none at all. My report before Synod...was in favour of a Synodical organization...[2]

Jones' scheme, however, was not adopted.

The last two schemes for raising financial support for slave missionaries were the only ones which won acceptance. The first was united action by each Presbytery, in which the Presbytery would secure the necessary funds and hire a missionary; he would then be responsible to the Presbytery. The Synod of Virginia, for example, placed responsibility for slave missions on each Presbytery, and thus, by implication, disassociated itself from any larger-scale scheme: "Resolved That the several Presbyteries belonging to this Synod be required to take the supervision of this whole matter...."[3] The vast majority of missionaries to slaves among Southern Presbyterians was supported in this way, and there are numerous examples to be found in the records.[4]

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[1] Cortlandt Van Rennselaer to William S. Plumer, MS letter, August 18, 1834. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society.

[2] Charles Colcock Jones to William S. Plumer, MS letter, December 8, 1835. William Swan Plumer Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society.

[3] Minutes of the Synod of Virginia, MS, Vol. 8, p. 199 (October, 1844).

[4] Various examples are given briefly by C.C. Jones, Religious Instruction, pp. 65-85; Jones' survey took account of work through 1842. For further examples see Watchman of the South, November 24, 1842; Watchman and Observer, November 13, 1845; Minutes of the Presbytery of Bethel, MS, Vol. 2, p. 23 (April, 1851); Minutes of the Presbytery of East Hanover, MS, Vol. 3, p. 73 (October, 1846); Minutes of the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa, MS, Vol. 2, pp. 357-359 (October, 1848), and Vol. 3, pp. 347-348 (April, 1858). The number of men specifically set apart for missionary work among slaves was very small in any one year. In 1860, only three

The final method of support was through the formation of an association of interested people, usually planters, who would donate money toward the support of a missionary. The Synod of Alabama expressed its support of such endeavors:

> The committee on the instruction of the colored population, made their report, which was received and adopted, as follows....That we highly approve the measure that has been so successfully adopted in some of our sister and neighboring states, of the formation of Associations of planters and slave owners, for the employment and maintenance of discreet and devoted Ministers, as missionaries to the blacks, who, under the patronage of the Association, labor among the negroes on the plantations, preaching the Gospel to them at suitable points, visiting the Negroes at their quarters and in their cabins, and catechising their children with all pastoral fidelity, tenderness and care. Such Associations we deem eminently judicious, safe, and productive of good to all classes....[1]

Evidence is lacking to determine how widespread this method of support was, but it seems to have been comparatively rare. In North Carolina one minister spent full time in a ministry to slaves. An observer of his work commented:

> It is due to the humanity and generosity of their owners, to state, that they made especial efforts and very liberal pecuniary contributions, to secure for their servants the religious privileges they have enjoyed, and are determined still to furnish them with sound religious instruction....[2]

The best known examples--and quite possibly the only really successful examples of planter associations--occurred in the coastal areas of Georgia. In 1830 an association of planters was formed in McIntosh

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men were listed as "Missionary to coloured people" in the Southern states; one was in Alabama and two were in Mississippi. Such listings are probably not reliable, however, since some names are listed as missionaries without any indication as to the nature or location of their work. GA Minutes (O.S.), 1860, pp. 213-252.

[1]Minutes of the Synod of Alabama, MS, Vol. 1, pp. 172-173 (October, 1845).

[2]Southern Religious Telegraph, July 27, 1832. The minister was Rev. John Dickey, but little else is known about the work.

County which hired Rev. Joseph Clay Stiles as a missionary to slaves. It apparently lasted only a few years.[1] Much more successful was an association formed in Liberty Country, to which we shall give more detailed attention later.

The formation of associations of planters for the purpose of supporting missionaries to slaves was undoubtedly unsuccessful because of the practical problems involved. In any given area the planters would tend to be members of various denominations, and many would in all likelihood have no religious affiliation. Therefore, it would be unlikely that non-Presbyterian planters would support to any extensive degree the ministry of a Presbyterian missionary. It is of more than passing interest that Charles Colcock Jones, the missionary of the Liberty County, Georgia, association, was independently wealthy and apparently drew no financial support from other planters.

The formation of planter associations is related to the final difficulty which faced any effort to reach the slaves through special missionaries, namely, the problem of convincing the individual planters that such missions were in no way intended to interfere with the institution of slavery. There was clearly only one way to overcome this problem, and that was to convince the planters that the missionary was only concerned about the religious aspect of the slave, and such an interest in no way affected slavery as such. Much of this has been evident in our previous remarks. Perhaps the attitude of almost all Southern Presbyterians was summarized by Charles Colcock Jones in a letter to the Charleston Observer:

> It is a matter of unfeigned gratitude to God, that He has, in a short time, raised up, so many able advocates and supporters of the Religious Instruction of the Negroes, and that the cause steadily advances in the

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[1] C. C. Jones, Religious Instruction, p. 72.

> Southern States. But let the advocates and the supporters of this cause be careful of one thing--that they keep to their appropriate work; and not allow themselves to mingle with it, or to be drawn into civil and political questions, touching the people, who are the objects of their benevolent regard....Our one--our exclusive--our avowed object is, to preach the Gospel to the Negroes, in a manner consistent with the labors and customs of the country. And whether we act individually or collectively, that object must remain the same.[1]

In summary, therefore, the peculiar circumstances of the slave population imposed various limitations on Presbyterian missions to the slaves. A variety of methods were suggested to overcome these barriers. No single method was adopted, however, and each method had inherent difficulties. Most of these difficulties were a direct result of the nature of the institution of slavery. What was not clearly seen was the fact that missions to the blacks could be carried out completely only when slavery was abolished.

EXAMPLES OF MISSIONS TO SLAVES

Some idea of the difficulties, motives, and methods in slave missions can be grasped more clearly by examining the work of those who were actually engaged in such efforts. We have accordingly chosen two men about whom there is fairly full information, John Holt Rice and Charles Colcock Jones. Similarities will be noted between the ministries of these two men, although in some ways their efforts were quite different.

In 1804 John Holt Rice became pastor of the Cub Creek Church, in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The Church, Rice found, had a fairly large number of black members, and immediately he decided to expand the work to bring in other blacks. Some of the blacks in the church had

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[1] Charleston Observer, July 27, 1832.

been instructed by Samuel Davies, and had later been sold to a master in the area of Cub Creek. The church itself had a tradition of ministry to the slaves, and one of Rice's predecessors, Drury Lacy, had established the pattern Rice was to follow of appointing black elders to have oversight of the black members.[1] When Rice came to Cub Creek there were fifty-eight white communicates and fifty-five blacks; at the close of his ministry there in 1812 there were over one hundred blacks.[2]

Three things in particular characterized Rice's ministry with the slaves. In the first place, he established the pattern of preaching a special sermon to them immediately following the usual Sunday worship service; many whites, however, also attended this service. He developed a simple preaching style he felt was especially beneficial to the uneducated slaves.[3]

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[1]Lacy was apparently never ordained pastor of the church, but supplied the church with some frequency. Foote recounts that one wealthy lady, not a member of the church, encouraged her slaves to attend during Lacy's ministry, and about sixty became members. She found their behavior so exemplary that she was able to dismiss her overseers and entrust the work of the plantation to the slaves themselves. Foote, Va. (1st), p. 504. It is of interest that Rice's immediate predecessor at Cub Creek was Archibald Alexander, who later was the first professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. The biography of Alexander written by his son makes no mention, however, of any specific work among the slaves on his part during his pastorate there. James W. Alexander, Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D., (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), pp. 155-203.

[2]Maxwell, op cit., p. 34; Foote, Va. (2nd), p. 303.

[3]"He had considered, it seems, with much reflection the peculiar cast of their minds, growing out of their condition and circumstances, their ignorance, and habits of life; and felt particularly anxious to guard them against that passion for excitement, and consequent proneness to fanaticism, which had become almost a part of their nature; and which he thought had been too often stimulated to dangerous excesses by injudcious preaching. His aim, therefore, was to give them sound and rational instruction from the word of God; adapted, however, of course to their capacities, and suited to their actual state; and he was particularly careful to insist upon their serving their masters with all fidelity, as well as behaving humbly to one another...." Maxwell, op. cit., p. 35.

A second aspect of Rice's ministry to the slaves was his use of selected blacks to aid in the pastoral oversight of the black members. These men were called "watchmen," and there were usually four or five in number. Their function was essentially disciplinary; they were to report cases of misbehaviour either to Rice or to a member of the session; they likewise seem to have had some function in catechising the black children, and most of the slave children were said to be capable of repeating the Shorter Catechism.[1]

The third aspect of Rice's work was especially unique. In order to give more attention to the black population he obtained a commission from the General Assembly in 1806 to spend two months as a missionary to the blacks.[2] The commission was renewed yearly until the end of his pastorate at Cub Creek. The extant reports of Rice to Ashbel Green, chairman of the Assembly's Committee on Missions, give insight not only into Rice's work among the blacks, but of the difficulties any missionary to slaves might encounter. He found that many of the slaves wanted to learn to read, and he solicited the aid of the Committee in procuring spelling books.[3] He had several preaching points,[4] but one year found a large number of his charges removed to a distant plantation by their master, which made it almost impossible to continue a ministry among them.[5] He likewise found that

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[1] Ibid., p. 35; Foote, (Va. 2nd), p. 303.

[2] GA Minutes, Vol. 1, p. 367 (1806). Although there is no definite statement of Rice regarding his motives for securing the commission, it may be that he considered an official commission helpful in overcoming any opposition on the part of masters.

[3] John H. Rice to Ashbel Green, November 12, 1810, MS letter, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[4] John H. Rice to Ashbel Green, n.d., reprinted in The Evangelical Intelligencer, Vol. 3, (1809), p. 391.

[5] John H. Rice to Ashbel Green, May 1, 1811. MS letter, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

some disciplinary matters were definite problems in his work, especially those relating to marriage.[1] Among the biggest barriers to an effective Presbyterian ministry among the slaves, Rice felt, was the strong preference they had for black preachers, whom Rice found to be "as ignorant as any of their species."[2] He also found that his work involved much delicacy in trying to maintain respect both with the masters and their slaves. In order to obtain greater access to slaves he undertook to show masters how Christianity would make their slaves more industrious and obedient; the slaves, however, took offense at this and he found that attendance at his services dropped for some months afterward.[3]

In spite of the problems, however, Rice felt he was having a fruitful ministry. He found that the Gospel had had a salutary effect on the slaves:

> Such is the regularity and order of my blacks, and so superior are they in every respect to ordinary negroes that they are not only esteemed by the whites but have very considerable influence among men of their own colour. So that where any considerable number of them is embodied, there is less of that disorder, and fewer of those crimes, which are found among this part of our species, than in any other part of our country.[4]

At the end of his time at Cub Creek he could report that there had been no cases among the blacks requiring church discipline.[5] When he left for his pastorate in Richmond the slaves expressed great grief at his going, "as I have never before witnessed on a similar occasion."[6]

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[1]Rice to Green, Evangelical Intelligencer, Vol. 3, pp. 390-391.

[2]Ibid., p. 391. See also Rice to Green, November 12, 1810. MS letter, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[3]Rice to Green, Evangelical Intelligencer, Vol. 3, p. 392.

[4]Rice to Green, May 1, 1811, MS letter, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[5]Rice to Green, May 11, 1812, MS letter, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[6]Ibid.

Rice was not content to develop his work among slaves, but felt responsibility to encourage other ministers to do such work also. He had been asked by a member of the Committee on Missions to write a pamphlet on slave instruction; the project did not apparently come to fruition, but Rice was responsible for an article in the Virginia Religious Magazine which was the first published attempt by a Southern Presbyterian in this early period to encourage such work. The article told of the success of a plantation owner in instructing his slaves in religion, and contended that the instruction, rather than giving them ideas of liberty (as some contended would happen), instead made them more faithful servants. Rice's emphasis was that it was not enough to allow slaves to attend public worship, but that individual masters should seek to include their slaves in religious instruction.[1]

Rice's work with slaves is of interest not only for its intrinsic value, but because it was one of the few systematic attempts to reach the slave population in this earliest period. It is interesting that Rice's next church, in Richmond, apparently made no attempt to reach blacks; this in part was probably due to the existence of several large black Baptist churches in the city.

The most widely known Southern Presbyterian worker among the slaves was Charles Colcock Jones, who devoted the major part of his life to slave missions.[2] Jones was born into a reasonably wealthy and

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[1]"A Sabbath Evening, at Mr. Jervas's." The Virginia Religious Magazine, Vol. 2, pp. 161-170. The authorship of the article (one of a series on "Mr. Jervas," a fictitious Virginia planter) is ascribed to Rice by Maxwell, op. cit., p. 38.

[2]Details on Jones' life can be found in Joseph M. Wilson, The Presbyterian Historical Almanac, and Annual Remembrancer of the Church. For 1867. (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1867), pp. 438-442; John S. Wilson, Necrology: or Memorials of the Deceased Ministers, Who Have Died During the First Twenty Years After its Organization. Prepared in Obedience to the Order of the Synod. (Atlanta: Franklin Printing House, 1869), pp. 185-211; Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina, (Columbia: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884), pp. 195-204. Additional details can be found in R. Q.

influential family in Liberty County, Georgia. He was educated in the North at Phillips Academy, Andover Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1831 he became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, but resigned after eighteen months to devote himself to missionary work among the slaves of his native County.

Liberty County was one of the few places in the South that had experienced fairly consistent efforts to reach the slave population before the general increase in interest in the South about 1830. The Midway Church in that County had erected a shed for the exclusive use of its black members in 1785, and about the same time one of the planters in the area hired a free black who was active in the Midway Church to instruct his slaves.[1] Rev. Cyrus Gildersleeve, who became pastor in 1791, endeavored to reach the slaves in the area, and several slaves appear to have been active, with the approval of the Midway Church, in meetings held especially for the black population.[2] In 1811 the Church came under another pastor, Rev. Murdock Murphy. About that time the Church appointed black men who would have superintendence over some of the slave members:

> ...the Church appointed some of the most intelligent, pious and prominent male members to be a kind of superintendents or watchmen over the rest. Their charges embraced one or two plantations. Their office was to conduct the evening prayers with the people: watch over the conduct of Church members, report cases requiring discipline: and give instruction to those under conviction of sin and asking admission into the Church.[3]

By 1827 the Presbytery of Georgia could report, "Great attention has

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Mallard, Plantation Life Before Emancipation, (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1892), pp. 91-129. His ministry has been briefly summarized by Andrew Murray, op. cit., pp. 54-59 and E.T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 438-441.

[1] C.C. Jones, 10th Annual Report (1845), pp. 5-6.

[2] Ibid., pp. 7-9.

[3] Ibid., p. 10.

been paid in that congregation to the religious instruction of the blacks, and it has issued in happy results on their moral and religious character."[1] In early 1831 a number of planters of various denominations formed "The Association for the Religious Instruction of the Negroes, in Liberty County, Georgia." Twenty-nine individuals signed the original constitution of the organization, and plans were laid for systematic instruction at various preaching points in the County, led by laymen. The plan, however, failed; Jones attributed it to the inexperience of the laymen.[2]

Thus when Jones returned to Liberty County there was already a tradition of religious instruction, as well as an organizational structure by which it might be performed. In late 1832 Jones became the missionary of the Liberty County Association, and immediately embarked on an intensive effort among the slaves of the County.

A survey of planters by the members of the Association revealed that approximately fifty plantations would be open to the ministry of the Association's missionary.[3] The first year Jones secured six locations as preaching stations; some of these seem to have been regular churches, but others were locations in the open. He reported that at the end of his first year he had preached on forty Sundays, and in addition had held sixteen or seventeen meetings at plantations.[4] The Sunday meetings were devoted to preaching, both in the morning and the afternoon, as well as catechetical instruction and personal conversation. The plantation meetings were of special interest to Jones. His

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[1] "Narrative of the State of Religion within the Bounds of the Presbytery of Georgia," Charleston Observer, April 28, 1827.

[2] C. C. Jones, 10th Annual Report (1845), pp. 14-15.

[3] C.C. Jones, 1st Annual Report, (1833), p. 7.

[4] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

procedure from the first was to write a plantation owner proposing that Jones visit his plantation on a certain date, if it was convenient. Jones then left the arrangements to the planter. Most of these were held at night, which necessitated difficult travel on Jones' part; Mallard attributed the final breakdown of his health to this.[1]

As time went on Jones came to emphasize the plantation meetings more and more. In the Third Annual Report of the Association, for example, Jones stated:

> The labours of another year have convinced me, more than ever, that in order to the success of our work, the Gospel should be carried, frequently and statedly, to the people on their respective plantations. There in their very homes, let the Missionary or the Minister preach and converse with the adults, and catechise and instruct the children. In such visits the Minister performs the duty of a Pastor....The necessity of such Plantation instruction, arises from the fact well known to the association, that there are large numbers of negroes, that seldom or never attend the Churches on the Sabbath.[2]

At the same time Jones continued his Sunday work, and found that it also grew rapidly. Beginning in 1838 the various preaching points under Jones' care experienced a revival which resulted in many converts; it continued until 1842.[3] By 1842 Jones reported that the four active Sunday schools then under his care had an average total attendance of 398.[4]

Jones also followed the pattern of previous workers by appointing selected "watchmen" who would help in the pastoral care of those at each preaching station. Part of each Sunday would be spent

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[1] Mallard, op. cit., p. 96.

[2] C.C. Jones, 3rd Annual Report (1835), pp. 4-5.

[3] C. C.Jones, 8th Annual Report (1842), p. 4.

[4] C. C. Jones, 5th Annual Report (1839), pp. 5-6; 10th Annual Report (1844), pp. 29-32.

in a meeting with the watchmen.[1] Jones argued that such helpers were useful if chosen carefully, and described the duties of them:

> The duties of coloured helpers vary with circumstances and places. Briefly, they conduct evening prayers on plantations where they reside, or are permitted to visit; give instruction to persons under conviction of sin; assist members in their Christian walk, by warnings, reproofs, and exhortations of a private nature; heal breaches; report cases of delinquency to the church; see that the children are taught their prayers, and that the people attend worship; visit the sick and bury the dead, and by appointment of the church, they are sometimes empowered to perform marriage ceremonies.

He also secured the aid of interested white persons; several of them operated Sunday schools in addition to those supervised by Jones.

The nature of the Liberty County Association meant that Jones was not concerned to get those under his care to join the Presbyterian Church. Members of various denominations were supporters of the Association, and Jones found that many of his converts became something other than Presbyterians.[3] Another interesting aspect of Jones' work was his constant insistence that the owners of slaves had a responsibility to treat them properly. Jones listed the major improvements which he felt were necessary on the part of slaveholders:

> 1st. They should provide sufficient and separate accommodations for the families of their servants....
> 2nd. They should not separate, nor allow the separation of husband and wife, unless for causes lawful before God....
> 3rd. Owners should use every effort to promote morality upon their plantations....
> 4th. Owners should promote honesty and thrift among their people....
> 5th. Owners should prohibit quarrelling and fighting

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[1]Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina, pp. 197-198.

[2]C.C. Jones, Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States; Together with an Appendix Containing Forms of Church Registers, Form of a Constitution, and Plans of Different Denominations of Christians. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), p. 19.

[3]C.C. Jones, 10th Annual Report (1844), p. 27.

> and profane swearing....
> 6th. Owners should promote the observance of the Sabbath on their plantations....
> 7th. The evil of intemperance ought to be guarded against in every form....
> 8th. And the amusements of the negroes deserve notice. The chief amusement, and that to which they become passionately fond is dancing....I do not think religion or good morals can flourish on a plantation where this amusement is permitted, and christian owners should be the last persons to give it countenance.[1]

Jones' influence extended far beyond the bounds of Liberty County. He became the most tireless advocate of slave missions among Southern Presbyterians, and through his writings did much to establish the pattern of missionary work carried on by Presbyterians throughout the South. The Annual Reports of the Liberty County Association were widely circulated, and most Southern Presbyterian newspapers reprinted both the Reports and other news of Jones' work. Jones' Catechism also was widely circulated, and several Presbyteries and Synods passed resolutions commending it.[2] In 1836 Jones was elected to the professorship in ecclesiastical history at Columbia Seminary; he used the position to urge the cause of slave missions upon the seminarians.[3] At a later time he became Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions, although it seems that his influence on the cause of slave missions was somewhat limited in that position. His last address to an ecclesiastical body was a powerful plea for slave missions before the first General

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[1] C. C. Jones, 13th Annual Report (1847), pp. 15-23.

[2] For examples see the resolution of the Synod of West Tennessee, American Presbyterian, November 16, 1837, and the Minutes of the Presbytery of Harmony, MS, Vol. 2, p. 120 (April, 1835).

[3] Mallard, op. cit., p. 126. Jones stayed at the Seminary two years, and then returned to his work in Liberty County. He stayed there until returning to the Seminary in 1848; in 1850 he moved to Philadelphia to take up his position with the Board of Domestic Missions. A breakdown in his health forced his retirement to Georgia in 1853.

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.[1]

In terms of his own work in Liberty County, Jones was reasonably successful. He felt, however, that one of the major failures of the Liberty County effort was the lack of pastoral oversight of the slaves. This, Jones complained, was the fault of the white ministers of the County:

> Our Churches should be made up of the population of the country as it is: and masters and servants are included in the charge of our Pastors. In my ministry therefore to the Negroes, I have acted as a Missionary, as an assistant to our settled Pastors, and not as a deliverer from their duties to the colored part of their charge. But our Pastors have done no more for the Negroes, since our coming among them, than they did previously. The Negroes have been almost entirely turned over into the hands of the Missionary, which is wrong.[2]

Nevertheless, his work seems to have made a significant impact. In resigning from his position in 1847, it was probably with some justification that Jones could say, "...comparing the state of the work now with what it was ten or fifteen years ago, we cannot fail to observe its remarkable progress."[3]

Jones was successful to a unique degree precisely because he was able to overcome the major barriers which plagued most attempts to reach the slave population. We have suggested that the major problems were personnel, finances, and planter resistance. In terms of personnel, Jones was clearly a dedicated and forceful individual who possessed extraordinary abilities. It is noteworthy that Jones was

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[1]C.C. Jones, Religious Instruction of the Negroes. An Address Delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, at Augusta, Ga., December 10, 1861. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, n.d.)

[2]C. C. Jones, 10th Annual Report (1844), p. 38.

[3]C.C. Jones, 13th Annual Report (1847), p. 57.

succeeded in Liberty County by several men; none, however, had the impact of Jones, either within the immediate County or over the South.[1] The problem of finances was solved largely by the fact that Jones owned his own plantation and devoted much of his weekday time to it; he thus was not dependent on the contributions of others. Finally, Jones was able to overcome the resistance of slaveowners. Not only did he frequently disavow any intention of upsetting the slave system; the fact that he was himself a slave owner, and a member of a prominent established family in the County, unquestionably did much to alleviate fears.

It was also precisely because of these reasons for his success that the pattern of his ministry is almost unique among Southern Presbyterians. Jones' social and financial position made it possible for him to carry on his ministry to the extent that he did. Only a man in similar circumstances, and with similar talents, could have engaged in the same work with similar success. Unfortunately, very few Southern Presbyterian ministers met these requirements.

EVALUATION

During the entire period under examination the question of the religious instruction of the slave population received much attention among Southern Presbyterians. By almost any standard, however, Presbyterian efforts to reach the slave population were of limited success. Exact statistics are not available. The General Assembly did not begin to report the number of black members until 1847; in that year 2,766 black communicants were listed, out of a total of 179,453 communicants.[2] Southerners, however, objected that such statistics were not a true reflection of actual black membership, since a number

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[1] E.T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 441

[2] G.A. Minutes, (O.S.), 1847, p. 531.

of Presbyteries had not reported.[1] By 1860 the General Assembly reported 13,837 black members out of a total of 292,927; again, however, some Presbyteries failed to report.[2] The statistics give little idea of actual Presbyterian work, however. In 1840 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia reported that it had 863 black communicants, but estimated that from 4,500 to 5,500 were under Presbyterian instruction.[3] However, as Murray has pointed out, "Even if the official figure should be tripled, it would still compare rather unfavorably with...the Methodists and Baptists"[4]

Southern Presbyterians were aware of this deficiency, in spite of their frequent optimistic statements about slave missions. In 1852 the General Assembly stated, "With few exceptions, ample provisions are made for their religious instruction."[5] The year before, however, the Presbytery of East Hanover acknowledged that "Though the colored people have not been altogether neglected, the care of them seems to be generally left to other denominations."[6] The Synod of Virginia the same year reported:

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[1] Watchman and Observer, August 26, 1847.

[2] G.A. Minutes (O.S.), 1860, p. 260. Almost all the black members were in the South.

Information on the work of the New School in the South among slaves is very scanty. Occasional resolutions concerning slave missions have been preserved from New School--or later, United Synod--Presbyteries. See the resolutions of the Presbytery of Clinton (Watchman of the South, January 2, 1845), Presbytery of Hanover (Presbyterian Witness, May 3, 1860), and Presbytery of New River (Presbyterian Witness, May 24, 1860). In 1859 the United Synod reported 423 black members out of a total of 12,125 communicants. G.A. Minutes (United), 1859, p. 90.

[3] Watchman of the South, December 24, 1840.

[4] Andrew Murray, op. cit., p. 59.

[5] "Narrative of the State of Religion," G.A. Minutes, (O.S.), 1852, p. 358.

[6] "Narrative of the State of Religion in the Presbytery of East Hanover," Watchman and Observer, April 24, 1851.

> A deep interest is expressed in the instruction of the coloured population; whilst at the same time it is felt that the present means are greatly inadequate, and that the work is embarrassed with peculiar difficulties in many places....[1]

A few years later a member of the Synod of Virginia put the matter more bluntly:

> Presbyterian ministers and churches seem to care very little for the conversion of the negroes. This may be indignantly denied. Appeal may be made to the Record, and it may be shown, that the Synod of Virginia has taken action....What are they doing? Let them testify. The committee on the Narrative is putting questions to them. "Have you any colored hearers? A few, sometimes." "Any regular system of religious instruction for them? None?" (Almost invariably the reply)...Only here and there does a minister report effort made for these poor souls.[2]

Any evaluation of the significance of the Southern Presbyterian effort at the religious instruction of the slaves must not be limited to a discussion of statistics, however. We have been discussing the question of the relationship of the Church to slavery. It now remains for us to examine the impact of the religious instruction of the slaves on the Presbyterian attitude toward slavery.

Southern Presbyterians faced a deep and almost insoluble problem in relation to slavery, and no where is it seen more clearly than in the question of slave missions. The dilemma was very simple. If Southern Presbyterians resisted the institution of slavery in the face of a Southern society which violently opposed emancipation, they would inevitably find themselves isolated, and, quite possibly, expelled. This meant that Presbyterians could not undertake mission

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[1] "Narrative of the State of Religion in the Synod of Virginia," Watchman and Observer, November 13, 1851.

[2] Central Presbyterian, May 1, 1858.

efforts of any kind, among either blacks or whites. On the other hand, Presbyterians could only remain as a viable Church in the South by adopting the Southern view of slavery. By so doing they would be able to carry out the mission they believed God had given them, among both blacks and whites. No other alternative seemed open to them.

Southern Presbyterian slave missions had two major effects on the question of the Church and slavery. First, slave missions tended to move the Southern Church toward a pro-slavery position. An anti-slavery minister simply would not be permitted to undertake any type of mission to slaves. On the other hand, by vocally declaring their orthodoxy on the question of slavery, Southern Presbyterians could become involved in this task. A Presbyterian paper in South Carolina stated the justification for a pro-slavery position by the Church:

> With the christian who enquires only what is the will of God as revealed in His word, the great question is, How can the gospel be brought to bear most certainly upon the slave--by emancipating him or continuing him in bondage?...Would the facilities of preaching the gospel to the African race in this country, and their disposition to hear it, be increased by emancipation? If so, then it is most unquestionably the duty of every christian to exert himself in favor of emancipation, and that with the least possible delay....On the contrary, we believe that no nation, or tribe, or class of men on the face of the earth are so favorably situated for preaching the Gospel to them as the slave population of the United States....We therefore consider it the duty of Christians, from a regard to the spiritual, which are the chief wants of the slave, to resist every attempt at emancipation.[1]

The effects of a pro-slavery stance on the Church's mission were also reflected in a letter written by the Secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions:

> I am exceedingly anxious my Brother to see the South, and the whole South embark more decidedly and energetically in the work of Home Missions. There is a vast amount

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[1] Southern Christian Herald, April 27, 1838.

> of important missionary ground in the South, which should be occupied, and that without delay. And the present seems to be a peculiarly favorable moment for a close, and strong union...for the supply of our Southern destitutions--The action of the late Gen Assembly on the subject of slavery, was in my mind most happy--And I believe the way is fully open for bringing the united resources...to bear on the great work of supplying the South.[1]

Almost ten years later the General Assembly acknowledged:

> The position taken by our Church with reference to the much agitated subject of slavery, secures to us unlimited opportunities of access to master and slave, and lays us under heavy responsibilities before God and the world, not to neglect our duty to either.[2]

Thus the Church assumed a pro-slavery stance in order to carry out its mission. This stance was felt to be advisable for its mission to the white population; any mission undertaken to the black population made it necessary.[3]

The second effect of slave missions on the question of the Church and society involved more directly their impact on slavery. By encouraging and undertaking missions to slaves, Southern Presbyterians tended to reinforce the institution of slavery. This was most clearly seen in the last decades before the Civil War when the Southern Church moved toward a position which affirmed that slavery was God-ordained. Part of the motivation behind this affirmation was undoubtedly a desire

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[1]William McDowell to Francis McFarland, MS letter, July 16, 1845. Francis McFarland Papers, Montreat. McDowell was here concerned with missions in general, not just missions to slaves. The same principle applied, however; the success of any type of mission work in the South was dependent on the Church's attitude toward slavery.

[2]"Narrative of the State of Religion," G.A. Minutes (O.S.), 1854, p. 184.

[3]For further indications of the connection between slavery attitudes and slave missions see the report of an observer at the 1841 General Assembly, Watchman of the South, June 10, 1841. He noted the reports of several ministers from Florida and Mississippi declaring that the work of the Presbyterian Church among slaves would only flourish if the General Assembly made it clear it had no interest in interferring with slavery.

to undertake slave missions. By proclaiming that God was on the Southern side, the Church was in effect buttressing the institution of slavery against any constructive criticism. Slavery was further reinforced by the practice of teaching the slaves to be content with their station in life. In stressing subservience, Presbyterians (as well as other denominations working in the South) were inculcating attitudes of inferiority and passivity which would remain for a long time. It was probably only with slight exaggeration that a later Southern Presbyterian writer could affirm that the Christian slaves were largely responsible for the fact that the slave population did not revolt during the Civil War.[1]

Southern Presbyterians undertook missions to the slaves with various sincere motives. However, the long-range implications of their actions were not always apparent to them. Such activities brought a reinforcement of pro-slavery attitudes, both within the Church and within Southern society generally. It is one of the ironies of history that in carrying out what they conceived to be their unique mission Southern Presbyterians lost their uniqueness. In terms of social and cultural attitudes there was little to distinguish them from other Southerners by the beginning of the Civil War.

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[1]Henry A. White, op. cit., pp. 306-307.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Our study has been concerned with the reaction of Presbyterians in the American South to two distinctive aspects of Southern society, slavery and Southern sectionalism. We have sought to examine the attitudes of Southern Presbyterians to these twin issues, and have attempted to identify the changes which took place in their thinking. We have furthermore suggested some of the major forces which were at work bringing about these changes. We have noted the following major points:

1. Before 1789 there was a general uncritical acceptance of the institution of slavery among the few Presbyterians in the South. They frequently sought to carry out their mission by including the slave population in their efforts, and many of the patterns of later slave missions were established at this time. There were, however, a few instances of strong anti-slavery sentiment, particularly toward the end of the period. This reflected a trend within the Presbyterian Church nationally, which dealt with the question of slavery toward the end of the period, and condemned its indefinite existence. Before 1789 Southern Presbyterians also on occasion exhibited a concern for their society and its welfare, and felt free to criticize certain aspects of Southern society and government. They gave evidence of their concern about political matters by their active participation in the American Revolution.

2. In the decades following 1789 Southern Presbyterian attitudes on slavery can best be described as diverse. There were many who accepted the prevailing Southern position on slavery. How-

ever, a fair number of examples have survived of individuals who held the position that slavery was morally wrong and should be immediately abolished. Such views were not tolerated and those holding them eventually left the South. Their departure did not, however, mean that the remaining Southern Presbyterians were pro-slavery. Many of the leaders of the Southern Church in various geographical areas took anti-slavery positions, although expressing perplexity concerning the proper means and time of emancipation. Among those who felt strongly about slavery it was not uncommon to migrate to a free state. Many Southern Presbyterian's also expressed enthusiasm for the American Colonization Society, seeing in it a possible way of eventually abolishing slavery.

3. In the 'early period' after 1789 Southern Presbyterians also began to grapple with the question of the Church's relationship to secular society. Dominating such evaluations was the question of Church-State relations. Attention for the most part was directed at the question of the State's interference in the affairs of the Church; this concern reflected the fear of many that the European pattern of established churches would be instituted in America. Therefore, little attention was given to the question of the extent to which the Church should attempt to influence the State. Nevertheless, during the period Southern Presbyterians expressed the conviction that religion was the only foundation of a stable society. Hence, the Church had a responsibility to inculcate moral values, and could therefore on occasion speak on public issues which had moral implications. There was furthermore an assumption that a stable society was in accordance with the divine will, and should therefore be a goal toward which Christians worked. The period also saw the adoption of a firmly national stance in which Southern Presbyterians, while not losing their sectional concern, sought to support and encourage the new American nation.

4. The so-called 'early period', beginning in 1789, ended at different times in different geographical sections of the South. The beginning of the next period--what we have called the 'period of transition'--was marked by a shift in thinking concerning slavery by Southern Presbyterians. At the beginning of the period of transition diversity of opinion was evident; by the end of the period virtually all Southern Presbyterians had adopted a pro-slavery viewpoint. This transition in thinking took place partly in response to definite secular and ecclesiastical events.

The period of transition began first in the lower Atlantic States of South Carolina and Georgia. The initial impetus for transition is difficult to determine directly, but seems most likely to have stemmed from the furor over slavery associated with the Missouri Compromise. Shortly afterward Southern Presbyterians in the area were clearly moving toward a completely pro-slavery stance. Interest in the slavery issue was renewed in a 'movement toward concensus' during the rise of militant abolitionism in the North. At that time (in the early 1830's) various Church judicatories within the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia took note of the rise of Northern anti-slavery sentiment, and condemned it in the strongest possible terms. The Southern reaction to abolitionism, therefore, forced the Synod to affirm its 'orthodoxy' on slavery; at the same time the practical effect was to eliminate any serious discussion of the morality of slavery. The end of diversity on the slavery issue was associated with the reaction to the threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly during the course of the Old School-New School debates. The Synod won silence on the issue from the Old School General Assembly, and thus was guaranteed freedom to maintain its pro-slavery position. After the 1839 General Assembly it was clear there would be no serious

threat of agitation in that body. That date likewise marked the end of any diversity within the Synod on the issue of slavery.

The period of transition began later in the Synods of North Carolina and Virginia. The initial impulse came from the threat of agitation by anti-slavery forces in the General Assembly about 1827. Fearing the repercussions of such agitation for the Churches within the two Synods, many began to suggest that slavery was not an issue for discussion in ecclesiastical circles. The threat of agitation passed, however, and much anti-slavery sentiment was still discernible. Opinion began to shift radically in 1831 and 1832 as a result of three factors: the Nat Turner insurrection, the debate over slavery in the Virginia House of Delegates, and the rise of militant abolitionism in the North. Some Presbyterians were hopeful that the Virginia debate might lead to some feasible scheme of emancipation, and interest was momentarily renewed in the possibility of colonization. The failure of the State to take constructive action, coupled with the rise of anti-abolitionist sentiment, made many Southern Presbyterians in the Synods abandon their anti-slavery position. The end of diversity on slavery came with the threat of anti-slavery agitation in the General Assembly during the Old School-New School debates. As in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, this forced the Synods to adopt a firmer pro-slavery attitude, and by 1839 little diversity is discernible.

Generalizations about Presbyterians in the Old Southwest are more difficult. It is clear that the rise of anti-abolitionist sentiment in this area had a strong effect on the Church and in some instances solidified pro-slavery opinion. As in the other two areas of the South, the Old School-New School division precipitated additional pro-slavery sentiment, so that by 1839 there was little

evidence of diversity in the area. The exeption to this was East Tennessee, which was less dependent on slave labor than other areas. Evidence points to many Presbyterians in that area maintaining an anti-slavery position during much of the period. There is little suggestion, however, that this led to specific anti-slavery activities in the area.

5. During the period in which Southern Presbyterians were moving from diversity to unanimity on the question of slavery, their attitudes concerning sectionalism underwent various stresses. Nevertheless, in general Southern Presbyterians maintained a national, rather than sectional, stance during the period. This was clearly seen in the crisis over nullification in South Carolina. It was likewise seen in the rejection of a sectional ecclesiastical organization during the Old School-New School debates. The Southern Presbyterian reaction can be attributed in part to their commitment to the goal of a stable society, and the belief that movements toward Southern sectionalism would lead to social and political instability.

At the same time, the new pressures concerning slavery led to some subtle changes in Southern Presbyterian views of their relation to the State and society. Of prime significance was a new emphasis on the spiritual mission of the Church, with an affirmation that the Church had no right to interfere in any political matter. Such questions were to be dealt with purely on an individual basis, not by the corporate Church. The existence of slavery was then declared to be a political question only, and thus beyond the scope of the Church's concern. At no time, however, did the Southern Church attempt to deal in depth with the question of what constituted a strictly political question. This view of the strictly-spiritual mission of the Church, reinforced by the Southern Church's attempt to avoid taking

a non-Southern position on slavery, effectively removed slavery as a subject for serious debate within the Church. The preoccupation with slavery also carried within it the seeds of developing sectionalism at a later date.

6. While the period of transition began at different times in different areas, it ended about the same time in all areas. The 1840's, therefore, were marked by unanimity on the question of slavery among Southern Presbyterians. The decade was not peaceful, however; Southern Presbyterians had to undergo a series of attacks from both ecclesiastical and secular sources outside the South on the question of slavery. The Southern Presbyterian reaction was defensive, and the attacks did little to bring about a constructive and objective examination of the slavery issue by them. At the same time, Presbyterians in the South refused to adopt the extreme pro-slavery positions of some Southerners, as exemplified in the debate over the unity of the human race. While there was some revival of interest in colonization during the decade, it no longer was related to any scheme of emancipation.

7. During the decade of the 1840's Southern Presbyterians in general continued to evidence a national outlook in major issues. This was seen clearly during the Mexican War, which was largely questioned by them. At the end of the decade, however, a perceptible change began to take place. As the South became increasingly concerned over the debates engendered by the Wilmot Proviso, Southern Presbyterians began to identify more and more with the Southern position.

8. The decade of the 1850's saw the emergence of a definite sectional stance among Southern Presbyterians, largely brought about by increasing unrest over the question of slavery. Many Presbyterians in the South expressed horror at the idea of disunion at the

first of the decade, although acknowledging that it might come to pass. Toward the middle of the decade the controversy over the admission of Kansas and Nebraska heightened sectional feelings, and by the time of the Harper's Ferry incident Southern Presbyterians were almost wholly identified with the Southern viewpoint. A major characteristic of this attitude was the feeling that the South was misunderstood and abused by the North. Hence, in the view of Southern Presbyterians, reconciliation could only come if the North sought to correct its abuses. By the end of the decade Southern Presbyterians were so inextricably bound to Southern culture that their future would necessarily be the same as the future of the South.

9. The period 1860-1861 marked the final stage in the movement toward a completely sectional stance. In common with others in the South, Presbyterians watched anxiously the elections of 1860 and the beginning of hostilities in 1861. In some areas--notably South Carolina--Presbyterians embraced the secession movement; in other areas there was more reluctance to do so. However, after the beginning of actual warfare there were only isolated instances of Unionist sentiment. The year 1861 also saw the final break between Southern Presbyterians and their brethren in the North. The formation of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in late 1861 officially marked the end of the national stance of Southern Presbyterians.

10. The religious instruction of the slave population was a concern of Southern Presbyterians during much of the entire period they were in the South. The rise of abolitionism and the fear of slave revolts in the early 1830's brought about a revival of interest in slave missions. In addition to religious motives, some saw such efforts as an instrument to insure the stability of the slave

population. The Southern reaction to abolitionism meant that such missions were frequently not acceptable to slaveowners; it was only after Southern concern about abolitionism declined in the early 1840's that renewed interest was shown in slave missions generally. There were, however, many problems confronting those who sought to undertake slave missions. Many of these were inherent in the institution of slavery, and no method was devised which was able to cope completely with these problems. Although undertaken frequently out of sincere motives, the religious instruction of the slaves had the long range effect of strengthening the pro-slavery stance of the Church. It furthermore strengthened the institution of slavery by encouraging slaves to accept their position.

We have seen, therefore, the development of attitudes over a period of time, as well as the way in which those attitudes influenced the course of Southern Presbyterians. There is a sense in which the formation of a separate General Assembly by Presbyterians in the South was the inevitable outcome of the position on slavery accepted decades previously. In their desire to maintain a viable Church in the South, Presbyterians adopted the cultural attitudes of their surrounding society. In the short term this accomodation to Southern values insured some degree of acceptance by that society.

In the long term, however, this conformity to Southern attitudes bound them inevitably to the fortunes of the South. Nothing could resist forever the winds of change that were blowing in the world, and by 1865 the slave-based culture of the South was in ruins. Bitter, bewildered, and isolated, Southern Presbyterians after the War would seek to justify their course of action as they tried to rebuild their shattered denomination. Many decades would pass before they would face

realistically the question of the proper relationship between the Church and its surrounding society.

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